No. 5, Vol. 40 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

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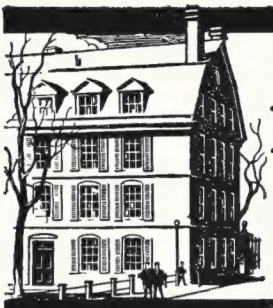
PUBLISHED MAY 20, 1916



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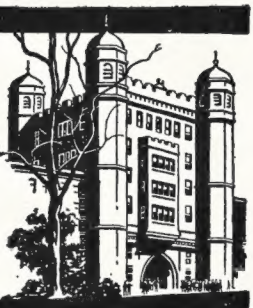

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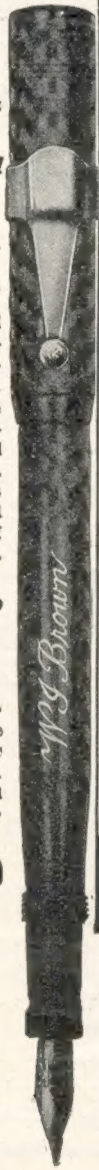

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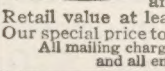

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TELLS THE ADVENTURES OF A CENTRAL-OFFICE MAN IN FIRST JUNE POPULAR

VOLUME XL NUMBER 5

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

CONTENTS

MAY 20th, 1916

COVER DESIGN . . . . . **Leslie Thrasher**

THE SAXONS. A Complete Novel, ... **Robert Welles Ritchie** . 1
Americans under the thumb of Japan in Korea. A story of business and empire building.

THE MOUSE HOLE. A Short Story, ... **Frederick Irving Anderson** 71
The creator of "Godahl" tells of a wealthy New Yorker whose inexplicable actions compelled the attention of the police.

THE INTIMATE ENEMY. A Four-Part Novel, . . **Clarence L. Cullen** . . 84
The personal narrative of a man who was a conscript in the army of King Alcohol. A man's struggle with himself, waged in the highest circles of Washington, in the slums of San Francisco, in the stormy republics of South America.

QUIEN SABE. A Short Story, ... **Henry Herbert Knibbs** . 116
The dog's name was Quien Sabe—"an ornery-looking cur." But you can't judge a dog by its looks. Ask the deputy sheriff.

STORIES OF THE LEGION. A Series, ... **H. de Vere Stacpoole** . 120
III.—Schneider.

GETTING HIS GOAT. A Short Story, ... **Ralph D. Paine** . . . 128
The tale of fifty freshmen and a pig.

THE TRADE WINDS' CALL. Verse, ... **Thomas Grant Springer** . 139

CAUGHT IN THE NET. Editorials, ... **The Editor** 140
Congress and the Purse Strings of the Nation. Real Play Boys of the West. Sense of Humor in Animals. "There She Blows." Nicknames. The Pinnacle.

THE FAMILIAR. A Two-Part Story, ... **J. Kenilworth Egerton** . 144
Tommy Williams on secret service in Austria.

IT LOOKED EASY. A Short Story, ... **H. C. Witwer** . . . 178
A tall, mysterious fellow, known as Williams the Great, implants a new idea in the bean of a prize fighter.

THE WAY OF THE NORTH. A Four-Part Story, . **Bertrand W. Sinclair** . 189
The solution of a girl's problem in the unforgiving timber country.

THE GO-GETTER. A Short Story, ... **John Amid** 215
If the Deacon with his little flivver had been content to take the other fellow's dust—but he wasn't.

AN INDIAN PURSE. Verse, ... **Henry Herbert Knibbs** . 224

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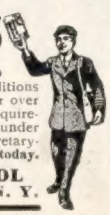

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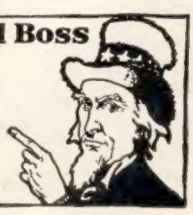

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Hurrah for a Rowland Novel

You will echo the cheer when you get the next POPULAR MAGAZINE, on the news stands June 7th, for in it you will find complete the latest novel from the pen of Henry C. Rowland. It will also add to your pleasure to find that the story centers about a detective who is altogether different from any sleuth you have ever met in fiction before—just a man of extraordinary common sense who demonstrates how uncommon that quality is. Besides this novel, that issue of the magazine contains Clarence L. Cullen's powerful serial on the drink habit—not a tract, but a transcript from life. Other authors represented are Frederick Irving Anderson, Peter B. Kyne, A. M. Chisholm, Albert Payson Terhune, Ralph Stock, Charles G. D. Roberts, Ralph D. Paine, H. de Vere Stacpoole, Hugh Fullerton and E. B. Mason.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XL. MAY 20, 1916. No. 5.

The Saxons

By Robert Welles Ritchie

Author of "Wings of the Wind," "The Cat and the King," Etc.

Japan has sat at Germany's feet and learned efficiency in warfare; she has sat at England's feet and learned efficiency in imperialism; she has refused to sit at America's feet and learn efficiency in altruism. This is a story of Korea following the annexation of the ancient kingdom by the Japs; a story of an isolated missionary of action in a land of inaction. Saxon grit, Saxon bulldog tenacity winning over the baffling dead weight of Oriental passivity. There are amusing as well as tragic moments in Ritchie's novel. Read, for instance, of the joy-riding of "the devil" across Korea by the man of action and his twenty-odd disciples of the American prophet Get-there.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

JOHN STRONG, American, sat on the balcony of Chu Fat's Star of the East Hotel on the cliffside at Chemulpo, the Korean port, and indolently watched a red-and-white serpent of lights twist and squirm through the dark streets below him. The night, the heavy odors of the town, the bobbing, winking lanterns of the Japanese celebrants, were all of the East—of the unchanging East, far beyond the frontier of white men's ordered scheme and the conventions of steel-built cities. Nights in Asia, especially in Korea, Asia's dead and untombed member, are pregnant of things felt but not seen. Spirits of forgotten ages are abroad in sooty darkness; they burden the sensitive mind of the Occidental with a pricking sense of the unnamable and the unthinkable. Starshine and dark alike are terrible west of Shimonoseki.

Perhaps the consciousness of John Strong, inured as it was by years of residence in the ghost land, still felt on this night the impinging of the weird. The dancing fillet of lanterns below him —lanterns white with a red, glaring eye on either side—the harsh, minor chanting of the Japanese marchers under the lights; the occasional droning of the coolie labor song coming from the quay, lit by crude gasoline flares; the other incidental noises of an outland town in the night: cries, noise of clogs on cobbles, the eldritch screech of a native flute—all these externals lured the imagination of the man on the gallery away from himself. Feet on railing, and arms crooked over his knees, he

leaned forward in his chair in an attitude of listening, his ear to the whispers of the night. A vile-smelling Manila between his fingers smoldered and went to black ash.

The light from the single glass lantern—fantastic Chinese affair of painted panel and pendant tassel—over his head revealed him as a man of unusual height; even though he sat folded up like a jackknife, a stranger seeing him could easily guess this fact. Shoulders trim and lean and competent spread the khaki of his jacket wide to his back; shoulders that braced a long, deep chest they were. All of his face that showed in the light was the abrupt angle of a heavy jaw; above that a protuberant cheek bone and a high forehead rising from the sharp bridge of an unusually thin and straight-edged nose. Yellow-brown hair crisped tightly about the temples; jaw and lip were barbered smooth. Blocked out in high light and lampblack, like the portraits affected by some German cartoonists, John Strong's face was one to look at twice. Motive force, rather than the softer refinements of the thinker, was stamped indubitably upon it; a will to do, to achieve against obstacles, to batter down all opposing wills.

The lantern procession—sinuous, swaying creature of fire glow—twisted and wormed through the streets up from the quay. The Japanese of Chemulpo were celebrating some local temple feast with all the zeal of Shinto and the colorful soul expression of their kind. Strong could hear the singsong droning of voices in falsetto chorus, an occasional shout above the flat monotone of the chant, laughter and shrill calls from one end of the line to the other. Knowing the Japanese vernacular, he understood the burden of the song. It was prideful, swaggering—a song of the soul of Nippon, such as he had heard bawled in the streets of Tokyo during the Russian war a few years before. The song was instinct of race consciousness and fighting lust, primitively aggressive.

The white man alone on the gallery did not sense the gist of the chorus with relish. No white man could; no Japanese cared whether he did or not. In common with most Occidentals who had viewed the swift surge of the Japanese toward exalted imperialism at near hand, John Strong had no love for the race. He had witnessed the last tragedy in Korea, the overturning of an ancient sovereignty by the conquering race from neighbor islands. He had seen the strong fist of Japan smash opposition, take government and people by the scruff of the neck and refashion them to its own fancy. But Strong was not one to permit sentiment to interfere with business; he was no tamperer with the machinery of destiny. He violently disliked the Japanese for strictly personal reasons and through no o'erweening love for the Koreans. Because they stood in his way—threatened his success; just that.

"Kimi ga yo wa chiyo ni yachio ni
Sazare ishi no iwawo to nari te,
Koku no musu made."

Voices directly beneath the balcony swelled suddenly into the anthem of the Meiji-tenno. Strong shifted his feet restlessly against the gallery railing and looked out over the harbor lights. Then, of a sudden, came a break in the song—stuttering exclamations, chattering laughter, and taunting shouts. Strong peered over the rail and saw a commotion of lanterns, the swaying and eddying of dark forms about a central core. He thought he heard the thudding of blows. In the vernacular came to him exclamations: "White-faced monkey! Foreign hound! Idiot!"

The big man on the gallery stood up and tried to bore through with searching eye the confused tangle of coolies'

backs, swaying heads, and nodding lights. Though it was an alien crowd he looked down upon, his ear caught the baying of the pack harrying a weakling; a cruel wolf note of torture and worrying was in the confused voice of the ruffians. Once the mass split, and Strong saw for an instant a limp figure being bandied about from hand to hand, knocked down, then stood up to be knocked down again. He glimpsed a white, bloodied face.

The springs of his body tensed. Back through the door into the hotel he leaped, raced downstairs to the deserted barroom. There he whisked up a heavy oak stave, used by Chu Fat to bar his door against night trouble, hurled back the street door, and made a flying leap over the nearest bent backs into the core of the crowd. Charging like a football player and with the stave held before him as a battering-ram, Strong penetrated the inner ring of bodies surrounding a huddled heap of clothing in the gutter.

"*Shoshi!* Water rats!"

The American bellowed his challenge, brought down his club on a pair of shoulders, kicked aside the body that dropped under the felling oak, and straddled the form of a white man lying motionless in the dust. A wall of stone was at Strong's back; before him instantly formed a wall of men. Under the bleared red-and-white lantern eyes was a ring of black, tousled heads and yellow, simian faces, all contorted into masks of fury and savagery. Gripping fingers lifted above the bristling hedge of heads; teeth showed in animal snarls; eyes narrowed into uptilting slits as a wolf's eyes curtain themselves for battle. A sharp sucking of breath sounded about the close circle.

"*Shoshi!*" The militant white man repeated in the Japanese vernacular the clan appellation of the city-bred tough. Then, "Come and get me! Who wants to die first?" he challenged.

The man in khaki, towering head and shoulders over the stunted, stocky yellow men about him, had his club swinging in short arcs from his shoulder. More than one eye ringed about Strong followed the jerking, nervous sweep of the stave and seemed spellbound by it. None moved to contend with this white man so stoutly armed. But those in the rear urged on the crouching fellows in the inner ring; several threw themselves into the attitude of jujutsu or judo, thighs wide apart, hands on knees, heads thrust forward like gamecocks' heads in the pit. They seemed to be timing the swinging of that oak club to catch an interval for a safe lunge. They looked, too, at the face of the white man, their antagonist. His lips were drawn back in a grin—the grimace of a lean fighting animal at bay; in his eyes was hate—hate for the color of the skins about him, for the arrogance and thinly veneered savagery of the Mongol pack.

"Banzai for the milk-faced bear!"

It was some roisterer in the rear who gave the cry. That instant the tension snapped. As ever when men are gathering their nerve forces for the sudden explosion of action—are at knife edge of assault—some paltry comicality, a word, a catcall, a sneeze, even, scatters the pent-up resolution into farce; so on this dark street in Chemulpo.

"Banzai for the milk-faced bear!" The cry was taken up by a dozen throats. Scowls dissolved to grins; mutterings changed to guffaws. Eyes that had glinted battle and murder but an instant before now gleamed with a new light, almost of admiration for the white man standing there at poise with his club. Bravery is a fetish with the Japanese; they recognize it and laud it in their enemies as generously as in their own kind. Strong sensed the easement of strain, but remained on guard, not to be beguiled by trickery. The crowd before him wavered, then

fell back into line of procession. Once more the bobbing will-o'-the-wisps were lifted high and the sound of clogs on cobbles gave tempo to the marching song:

"Sazare ishi no iwawo to nari te,
Koku no musu made."

When the last lantern had winked into blackness beyond the turn in the road, Strong stooped and lifted the man he had been straddling. He had the dead weight on his shoulder with a single heave, then walked over to where Chu Fat and a timorous servant had their eyes to the crack of the hotel door. They opened for him, and he strode in and laid his burden on the single rickety pool table in the barroom.

"Plenty water!" he commanded. "Some towels and whisky!"

The fat Boniface trundled to a locker behind the bar with much show of solicitude, while the soft-footed servant vanished to the washroom. Strong took a flask from the Chinaman's hand and bent over the unconscious man on the green felt.

He had been horribly harried. Marks of clogs were in livid blue and red on his forehead; there were cuts in the thinning brown hair above the wounded brow; a little trickle of blood came from one corner of the mouth. Aside from the angry discolorations, the face was the color of dirty plaster, darkened as it was by the stubble growth of beard upon the jowls. Strong bent closer to tip the whisky flask to the swollen lips, but he suddenly stayed his hand. The sickly sweet odor of Chinese gin was on the unconscious victim's breath.

"Here, bathe his head!" he ordered Chu Fat, trying to conceal from the sharp eyes of the Chinaman his altered intention. He himself chafed the man's wrists briskly and watched for the return of blood to the gray cheeks.

Five minutes passed, and the eyelids rolled back. The man lay staring up at the faces of the Chinaman and the American impassively and as one just emerging from the cloudland of ether. He raised a shaking hand to his head, drew thin fingers across his brow, and let them rest over his eyes. Strong saw a gold seal intaglio on the ring finger, bent closer with a sudden movement, and recognized the inscription. It was a West Point class ring—a badge men of the service nurtured in that school hold sacred with something of the old grail veneration.

For several minutes the man who had been the sport of the Japanese mob lay thus without moving. Then he lifted his hand from his eyes and looked from the fat, creasy face of the Chinese hotel keeper to the bronzed features of the white man. The gaze stopped there confidently.

"Then—it was you—who came and ——" His voice was a whisper.

"I helped you out a bit," Strong grunted. "They were doing you up—proper."

"They were Chinos?"

"Japs," Strong grunted. The man with the brutally marred face started.

"This is not—is not Japan? Why —where——"

The other bent a quizzical look, not a little tinged with disgust, upon his countryman before he said, with a short laugh:

"Wrong again. Korea—Chemulpo. You've seen some hard sledding, man."

"Chemulpo! Korea!" The waif closed his eyes, and his grotesque features were drawn anew into sharp lines of pain. "Almost—beaten to death—in —in Korea and—a thousand miles from —from——"

He threw out one hand petulantly, as if to push Strong aside, and a heart cry rushed from his puffed lips:

"Why didn't you leave them alone to finish me? It would have been—better!"

Suddenly aware of the telltale bit of

gold on his finger, the injured man covered his right hand with a screening left, while he twisted the seal to the under side.

"Put him to bed!" Strong commanded Chu Fat, and he drew the Chinaman away from the pool table to say in a low voice: "And when he wakes up, he'll call for whisky. Don't let him have it, but call me. I'll give it to him—not you."

Chu Fat and his servant carried the wounded man to a bed. Then Strong went up to his room and to the gallery out under the stars—there to smoke—and think.

CHAPTER II.

"Masta—masta! One-time wake-eye! Chu Fat, he say sickee man bottom side alla same makee dlink whiskee chop-chop!"

Strong awoke to find the soft-footed servant poking a deferential topknot around the half-opened door and grinning at him effusively as he delivered the message. Throwing a kimono over his pajamas, he followed the China boy downstairs and through the barroom to the little office beyond. Sounds of an angry altercation came through the glass door; snarling, short-chopped commands in English, and pleading, mollifying pidgin speech. Strong threw open the door and entered just in time to prevent the battered wight of last night's adventure wresting a flask from the protesting Chu Fat. With a single quick wrench, Strong had the whisky bottle away from the drink-mad wretch on the cot in the middle of the little room. Then he waved Chu Fat out and sat down on the edge of the pallet.

"Now, my friend," said Strong, his voice as crisp as ice shavings, "you will get one drink—I can't deprive you of that for a bracer—but no more to-day. You need a life-saver, all right; but you need somebody around to save you from the life-saver. That's me temporarily. Here!"

He poured out a stout jorum of the liquor, and watched the fevered man at his knees gulp it down with an eager gasp. The fellow's eyes kindled under the flame of the alcohol, and the twitching of his mouth swiftly grew less. He got a grip on himself with a manifest effort.

"Now," Strong continued, "I think we can have a little talk. Oh, no—no preacher chin-chin; don't be afraid—just a common-sense talk between gentlemen."

The other, at first glowering protest, caught the significance of the delicate emphasis Strong put on the word "gentleman," and he nodded acquiescence.

"To begin with, then, I'll tell you, if you don't know it already, that you are pretty near the end of your string—closer than the gin in you will let you believe. And if the drink doesn't get you, the land you are in—the people here—will. Do you believe that?"

"Yes," came the sighing answer.

"You know that the white man in Korea—the Anglo-Saxon white man—goes it on bluff—pure, triple-starred bluff—and the minute he shows his weakness the wolves here pull him down and rip him to pieces. Last night—well, they had you down and nearly out because your bluff was gone; you were in the gutter beneath their feet with booze, and they kicked you where you lay. Do you get my reasoning?"

"Yes."

"Because you are a white man, I jumped in last night and pulled you away from those wolves. Oh, no; nothing for you to say in thanks. Anybody with white blood in his body would have done the same thing. But because you are an American and—a gentleman, I believe, I am here doing what I am. I wouldn't give a hoot for you if you weren't both those things. Is that plain?"

The other nodded. His eyes were fixed on Strong's as the eyes of a man on the operating table search those of the surgeon whose hand may save.

"Now, I won't ask you your name. We don't do that out here in Korea. I won't ask you where you come from or how you happened to get here, for I have a suspicion that is a tender subject with you. But I will ask you this: Do you know anything about engineering—mining or civil—metallurgy or chemistry?"

"Call me West," came the answer through lips twisted into a wry smile. "Make it Tom West. And as to the rest, I know a little about civil engineering and enough chemistry to get by with. And, since I can guess where your question leads, I'll say that if you want to hire a drunkard such as I, who is in disgrace so deep he doesn't dare go back to face it, I would consider it an act of gentlemanly charity beyond—beyond my power ever to repay."

Sheer weakness of shattered nerves forced a trembling to West's lips, which he strove hard to command.

Strong had his head bent over a tattered wallet and was telling off a number of bills. He rolled them into a little cylinder and carefully tucked this under the whisky bottle, where it stood on a near-by table.

"I am manager of the Chon-san mines about two hundred miles north of here in the mountains," he said in a businesslike tone, as if continuing a conversation of affairs. "It's an American mine—American owned and American operated. There's only a handful of us from the States up there, jerking gold out of this ungodly country, kicking the Koreans with both feet and standing off the greedy Japs with both hands. We need more fellows with white faces and brains—and fists to help us out. Now you will act as sort of utility man in the assay office, down in the stamp mill or running line on the roads we're building. Your pay will be two hundred yen and chow. I'm giving you half a month's wages in advance, and you'll go back with me when I get some machinery that's out on a tramp in the harbor loaded onto a flat car."

He rose and laid a hand on the doorknob. West's eyes turned toward the whisky bottle left on the table by his cot with the thin wisp of bills under it, then up to Strong's face. He caught there the shadow of a grim smile.

"That advance salary of yours is under the booze," Strong said, spacing his words with meaning accent. "You can get the booze—or the bills—by simply stretching out your hand. I'm betting myself five to one you grab the bills without tipping over the bottle. When you do and feel all right again get a shave, spend a little in the clothing store Chu Fat runs next door to the hotel, doll up a bit, and come down to the quay. You'll see some fun there; me getting a bull of a ten-ton Pelton water wheel loaded on a car, with nothing but coolie power to do it."

Strong went out, leaving Tom West alone to make his choice between a bottle of whisky and redemption.

There was "fun" on the quay at Chemulpo that day, even as Strong had predicted. And chief working jester was the big man in khaki, whose voice carried to the uttermost limits of the stone pier and whose words were lightning. A dynamo in leather boots was John Strong at his business; his energy to command and direct pricked the worse than witless Korean longshoremen with a galvanic sting and set them at the limit of muscle readiness. The great water wheel—a shapeless bulk of steel crated in a wilderness of scaffolding—had been swung from the hold of the tramp steamer lying three miles out in the harbor to the decks of two sampans lashed together, and then labori-

ously ferried at high water to the side of the stone quay. There it lay, bobbing on the lapping waves, stared at by scores of natives who squatted like sooty penguins along the topping stones of the harbor front, turning over in their sluggish minds what sort of a devil engine of the white man this thing might be.

John Strong strode down through the gaping crowd, accompanied by a bright-eyed Chinese foreman, and started springs of action. A single word in the vernacular bellowed at the crowd of loafers sent them scattering; another, and more than fifty coolies, naked above the waist, came scampering from a near-by godown. The Chinese gang foreman gave his orders. The powerful coolies—giants with the spirit of whipped dogs—jumped to the words of direction. A heavy traveling derrick, mounted on a runway the length of the quay, was pushed down to command the weighted sampans ten feet below the quay level. Strong judged the position with a calculating eye, then sent a score of coolies to fetch teakwood skids from the quay superintendent's godown. They returned in chanting procession—ten wavering, straddling men under each beam marking time in their step by a whining, falsetto burden song, old as the stones of Chemulpo.

After an hour's work, the skids were securely lashed between quay edge and decks; the great water wheel and its casing were bound about by lengths of coarse cable, and the derrick's lines attached. Strong, nimble as a cat, had climbed over all the deckload, inspecting each knot, adjusting the rollers put under the forward end of the mass to be moved. The Chinese slave driver told off the biggest of his men to the derrick cranks, and ranged twenty others along auxiliary pulling ropes to guide the monster on its upward climb. Speed was imperative, for the tide was at the full, and it falls thirty feet at Chemulpo; an unforeseen halt of any consequence and in less than an hour the carrying sampans would be on their keels in mud.

Strong gave the word, the derrick windlass creaked, and the leader of the coolie gang—a great ox of a man with the face of a ten-year-old boy—sounded the weird, minor catch line of the "pulling song." The devil engine of the white man began to creep inch by inch up from the sampans on the bending skidway.

"Hey—o, there! Hey—o, there!
Don't be lazy! Don't be lazy!
Now hey—now hey!
Hai—yah!"

Blocks groaned, ropes whispered under tension, the monotonous chant rose and fell without cease, and the great, gaping mouth of steel crept nearer and nearer to the shelf of the quay. Then came the unexpected.

A black sea hawk, with cruelly curving bill and the menacing crest of the slayer, swooped down from nowhere and found perch on the iron-taut cable leading from the front of the crate over the derrick shoulder. There he sat, balancing for an instant, then he japed at the straining coolies on the quay with a wicked duck of his head and vented a shrill insult—a sharp, challenging cry.

There was a yell from the loafers, who scrambled to their feet and fell back from their perch on the sea wall; an answering yell from the coolies at the pulling ropes. One dropped his hold and ran; another fell over the next in line in his eagerness to get away and boggled the whole company there. The guiding ropes went slack, the click-click of the derrick windlass ceased; then the steel monster on the brink of the quay wavered for the space of a breath, slipped haltingly, trundled steadily backward with increasing momentum. One roller plumped into the water be-

low, and a corner of the huge packing scaffold veered over beyond the line of the skidways.

Strong, who had been standing in front of the derrick steadying the toilers by word and gesture, whirled about at the first sign of panic and rushed for the derrick platform. He saw the four men at the windlass cranks leap as if for their lives; saw the released arms of the windlass whirling unchecked. Up with a single bound to the platform, he seized a thick wooden stave and thrust it into the cog teeth of the whirling cams. They bit into the tough wood, splintered it, devoured it; but they were braked. The downward rush of the water wheel was checked even as it yawed over the skidway, balancing, ready to swing clear and crash against the pier wall at the push of a child's hand.

The American stood on the derrick platform, white-faced and trembling. First he looked at the crated machine, uptilted clumsily and threatening to destroy itself at the next slapping of a wave against the sampans; then he turned his eyes to the huddled group of the Koreans, standing far back on the quay, crowded close in the instinct of mutual protection, babbling and pointing like children. At the sight the blood flooded his cheeks and raised the veins in his neck until they pushed up the skin in ridges.

"You, Chung!" he called to the Chinese foreman, who stood at the quay edge cursing by all the devils of Kwangtung. "Bring one-piecee club and we'll show these Korean dogs what for."

The coolies waited their punishment with the stoicism of a better breed. They got punishment—brutal, man-killing punishment—and then went again to bend their pounded backs over the ropes. That afternoon the devil engine of the white man was safely blocked and bound on a flat car, ready for the journey north to the gold mine. A witness of John Strong's final triumph was the man who called himself West. Shaven, neatly dressed—a gentleman again in outward aspect and inner consciousness—he stood in the shadowed door of the dock master's godown and saw Saxon grit, Saxon bulldog tenacity win over the baffling dead weight of Oriental passivity. The victory stirred West, the man finding himself again, as nothing else in the world could. He saw exemplified the prime code of his kind. Here was a sermon weightier than all the didactic thunderings of the moralists. Here was what Strong had called "the white man's bluff."

CHAPTER III.

A warning shout, frantic scuttling to cover of a score of dirty white shapes; then the thunderous voice of dynamite. Up shot a cloud of dirt; rocks went spinning aloft to lop the branches of a giant pine; there was a crash and splatter of falling débris. Then the workers cautiously approached a riven wound in the mountainside and resumed their task of delving. Click of pick steel against flint; slither of spade on shale; shouts hurled back from the opposite wall of the valley—here was noise and welter of men at crude task.

Here where dynamite bit and tore and toilers bent their backs under burdens a road was being gouged out of the resisting flank of a peak. It was a fair, broad road that wound from level to level, following true to the surveyors' pioneering. It pushed inexorably through escarpments of mother rock, ventured daringly along the brink of sheer precipices, damned little cascades, and leaped gorges on spindling struts. Nothing of the fortuitous and timid advance of the native highway about this slash in the countryside; it laid its length down boldly and bluffly, challenging all the outraged demons of the Things That Were.

The road clung to the mountainside high, high above the floor of the valley, which showed blue with mist below. Down there, the length of a thin ribbon of water, lay the arch profanation of the sanctity of the hills. Crude, unpainted buildings were scattered in disarray on the cañon floor; the hump-shouldered roof of a shaft house; the broad back of a mill, whose twin stacks of black iron waved plumes of smoke in defiance of all the spirits of the rocks and gorges. In three places were ugly white scars—the dumps spewed out from the mouths of shafts, spreading detritus of the mines fanwise over a broken land. Slashes and scars in the soft bloom of the mountains' feet were everywhere. Crude red earth showed through remnants of greenery like the scars of a great infection. Disarray, ugliness, confusion!

Up from the valley came a din and drone of multifarious labor, softened and blurred by distance, as of some great orchestra in disharmony. The tempo was given by the crash! crash! crash! of heavy stamps, pounding to dust the gold-bearing core of the earth. Unceasingly and with unvarying measure of a cosmic machine the stamps pounded—ten of them and each dropping sixty times a minute. The air trembled under their din. Upon this base were built other sounds: screech of tortured metal tried against rock; hiss of steam through a piston head; cough-cough of a hoisting engine straining at a weight; roar of quartz dumped from an ore car into a hopper. The symphony of labor and dirge of earth racked by man; the dissonance was both.

The mines of Chon-san, reared upon the discovery of a shrewd American prospector and held by grant of the last Emperor of Korea; here was the single spot in all the dour peninsula where the Saxon had planted his feet for labor after the Saxon manner. Far up into the tiger-haunted mountains the lure of gold had drawn a little colony of square-shouldered Americans. There they worked in the fraternity of blood and common interest; thither by infinite labor they brought their engines and machinery; they impressed the native sluggards to the bondage of rough labor by a fair and stern rule of reward for value received.

Month on month and year on year the exiled white men in this little oasis of action fought, sweat, suffered—but triumphed. They got the gold. They got much gold—so much, in fact, that Chon-san had become, at the time this tale tells itself, a thing of desire in the envious eyes of the conquering Japanese.

John Strong, the man who had reared all this Titan's cradle of ugly shaft houses and sprawling dump heaps, working without rest as the isolated missionary of action in a land of inaction, had now to face a problem not laid down in the compilations of engineering science. Certain covert moves in the Japanese governor general's palace at Seoul; the exchange of notes, very diplomatically worded on the Japanese side and bluntly explicit in rejoinder, had brought on a delicate situation. Strong, resting on the broad general terms of the grant from the late emperor, was awaiting the next move at the time he made the journey to Chemulpo to bring up the giant Pelton wheel.

In Strong's absence his place as directing head of the mines was filled by Arthur Knowles, assistant manager at Chon-san. Knowles was a quiet-spoken, ready-witted little man who had won his way against hard rock and broken dikes in California and Mexico before coming to join the little army of the expatriates in Korea. He had hair so blond that it was almost white; his eyes were china blue and given to smiling. With him in Chon-san was

his wife, one who took her martyrdom to her husband's profession more sensibly than most women would; a brave figure of a girl of the Californian breed, ample of form, but muscular; beautiful after the Juno mold of wide-set, steady eyes and smooth, broad brow. Had Jessica Knowles not been a woman of rare balance and simple thought the life at Chon-san would have driven her to madness or rebellion long since.

There was but one other white woman in the camp—Elsa McClellan. Fate had played hard with her, and she had played bravely up to fate without flinching. Like Jessica, she had come to the Korean wilderness the wife of an engineer. That she was a fit woman of the pioneers she showed one day when men came to her and told her she was widowed. When they took the broken body of the man who had brought her to Chon-san up to the top of a sun-drenched hill and there buried it, Elsa McClellan lifted her face to the light and dedicated herself to solace through labor.

At Chon-san she remained, sharing the Knowles home. Her days and her nights she devoted to caring for the native laborers. There had been no hospital for the sick, and those who were brought wounded from the shafts. Sure in a past experience as a trained nurse, she prevailed upon Strong to provide hospital equipment, and there Elsa McClellan found her place.

Sorrow had not permanently branded the woman; it showed only in the firm lines of seriousness about her broad mouth and between her hazel eyes—eyes that seemed to catch and hold the morning misty light. There was strength in the poise of her head, auburn, crowned with heavy braids, in the curve from chin to throat and bosom, in width of shoulder and rounded, capable arms. Nothing of the girl about her; naught of the matron. She was a woman of thirty, with something of life behind her and much ahead.

Others of the camp were for the most part young collegians fighting for place on this ultimate frontier. Adventurous, heedless youngsters, they, with eyes always on the main chance and hearts abound to the urge of the possible events. Rogers, the red-headed transit man; Daniels, the chemist and assayer; Jay North, mill foreman; Roberts, who drove tunnel with all his old heat of line-bucking days at Berkeley—twenty-odd disciples of the American prophet Get There. Not to be overlooked was old Quartz Miller, handy man in tunnel and stope, and a relic of the olden time when Virginia City went mad. Quartz appeared to draw his sustenance from the tough gneiss he had been fighting for forty years in Nevada, New Mexico, and California; his worn hands seemed fossilized, his smile was bleak and rocky, and his mind was eighty per cent hard.

It was hot noon. A speck crawled, like a slow-moving insect, up a thread-like trail on the flank of one of the hedging mountains about Chon-san. Now it dodged into a fen, now it wormed its way across the naked shoulder of some lower spur; persistently, untiringly, it pushed upward until the topmost ridge was scaled and the valley of Chon-san lay far below. The American road builders on the opposite mountain saw the moving blot, watched it dodge in and out on the downward trail, wondered what it could be, and then lost sight of it. An hour later four coolies pushed out of the fringe of brush onto the floor of the valley by the big stamp mill. They bore on their shoulders two heavy poles, supporting the primitive Korean vehicle known to foreigners as a "chair"—a rough, curtained palanquin, wherein the concealed passenger squats with legs doubled under him and head

touching the canopied top in the acme of discomfort.

A voice behind the curtains gave directions; the carriers swung around the corner of the mill in the direction of the cluster of small buildings marking the offices and living quarters of the Americans. Calling occasionally to passing natives for directions, the chair men finally halted before a rough pine shack, over the door of which was the sign in Korean and English: "Headquarters." They carefully lifted the poles from their shoulders, lowered the chair to the ground, and then bowed low before the mud-stained curtains.

Knowles, looking through the windows of the office, saw the chair come up, stared in surprise, and, as he looked, a close-cropped Japanese head was thrust through the curtains; the head bobbed out and was quickly withdrawn, like the head of Mr. Punch surveying the field before he begins his diableries.

Again the curtains parted, and first a naked leg, with wooden-clogged foot, then a patch of blue kimono, and a second brown limb dropped themselves through the parted curtains. A squat body followed. The newcomer straightened himself painfully, patted out the wrinkles in his garments, settled his fan and pipe in the girdle about his waist, and stepped to the door. The coolies whisked the chair around the corner of the office, hurrying for the native quarter and bowls of rice wine.

Knowles had the door open, and was bowing gravely before his visitor had time to knock. The Japanese bent himself at the middle, ducked his head until his back creaked, and drew in his breath with the sharp, hissing sound that is politeness superlative in the Japanese code of etiquette.

"*O medeto gozaimasu,*" he murmured, and he continued to state in flowery formula that fortunate was the day whose sun thus allowed him to behold an honorable one.

Knowles, whose knowledge of the Japanese tongue scarcely carried beyond the requirements of shop and street, stumbled over the proper reply to the newcomer's greeting, and waved him into the office. He clapped his hands for tea, knowing well the requirements of convention. Neither spoke until the swift-footed Korean body servant had set out the steaming cups. The Japanese sipped his tea with a noisy intaking of breath, denoting rapture—polite rapture—then set down his cup and graciously smiled at the assistant manager. He had a bland, round face, brown and red like a full moon seen through marsh mist. His eyes were very small and as expressionless as huckleberries. A thin, hayrake mustache, whose spears still held glistening drops of tea, bristled from his upper lip.

"Ah—excoose my English," the visitor murmured, waving a deprecatory hand. "She iss ver-ry bad. You are Mista Strong?"

"My name's Knowles," the white-headed little man with the quizzical eyes answered. "Mr. Strong is away."

"Ah, *so desuka?* Mista Strong—he to Seoul have gone?" Innocence fairly beamed from the Jap's rosy face.

"No," answered Knowles, and he lit his pipe again. Once more the sibilant draft of tea.

"Ah!" breathed the guest. He scratched his bare leg with an exploratory toe. He filled and lit his thimble pipe, cleared his throat. The American made no effort to advance conversation. The Japanese smiled without cease.

"And you, Mista—excoose—Mista Knowles; you are as-sistant for Strong-san?"

"Yes."

"Then you—ah—make go the mines here while Mista Strong iss a-way?"

"I try to," Knowles answered, his blue eyes lit by a silent smile. Had anybody asked him, he would have ad-

mitted he was enjoying himself hugely. The Japanese was fully conscious of the challenge in the American's noncommittal attitude, and, despite his set smile, he could not conceal growing irritation. His weedy mustache bristled pugnaciously.

"I am Ichi Tsuyama," he said next, his voice carrying just a shade of brusqueness.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Tsuyama," Knowles drawled.

"Ah—then you have heard of me—nev-ver before?" The Japanese looked over the edge of his teacup with a curious side glance. "Nev-ver heard of Ichi Tsuyama of Bitsui Kaisha?"

Knowles shook his head for answer. There was long silence.

"Bitsui Company iss miners," the Japanese challenged.

"Well—well!" from behind the white man's pipestem.

"Yiss, they iss mining company, and —maybe—they make mining near Chon-san."

Knowles nodded.

"You use water for making milling of gold?" Tsuyama suddenly changed tack.

"Does the Bitsui Company?" Knowles parried.

"You use Chon-san Ribber here for making concentrate—for mill." This time there was no query in the Japanese visitor's tone. The American smoked with irritating uninterest. Tsuyama observed him narrowly; his eyes were shut to mere slits, and a smile that was not at all part of politeness played about his mouth.

"Bitsui Company use Chon-san Ribber, too," he purred.

"You're welcome to do so after we get through with it," the American said.

"Ha-ha, Mista—Mista Knowles! That iss a—how you call it in English —that iss a joking. Bitsui mines will use ribber first and then—no more ribber."

Tsuyama sat back and folded his hands over his solid front with a little gesture of satisfaction.

"Say, what are you driving at?" Knowles, losing his tactical advantage in an instant of hot-headedness, leaned forward and searched the masklike yellow face with eyes that kindled dangerously. "What did you come here for?" he continued. "To play a game of tag with me—or what?"

The Japanese chuckled.

"Ah, now Mista Knowles makes a wake-up. He knows some things now, yiss?"

Too late the assistant manager realized that he had lost something when his studied calm slipped from him, and he noted with growing anger how quickly the Japanese had seized the whip.

"Mista Knowles understands," the mellow voice of Tsuyama was continuing. "Bitsui Kaisha makes mining a-bove Chon-san mines on ribber—five, ten mile a-bove thiss place—and Bitsui use all water from ribber. None left for Chon-san."

"You're welcome to all the gold you'll find up there," Knowles snapped.

Tsuyama held up one finger argumentatively: "But Bitsui takes ribber; that is enough—a plenty."

The American mining engineer made a quick and strong effort to grip his rage. The seriousness of the situation this smiling, wily Oriental had threatened was borne in on him. Should the Japanese divert the river from Chon-san, there would be nothing for the American company to do but stack up useless ore. Without water there could be no stamp-mill operations, no concentrator work; the quartz, however rich, would not be worth one-tenth the transportation charges to the nearest available reduction works, which were

at San Francisco. Here, indeed, was the menace of months' simmering come to a boil.

"Listen to me, Mr. Tsuyama," Knowles began, striving to master the trembling of passion in his voice. "The Chon-san mines are held by proper grant from the Emperor of Korea. Nobody has ever questioned the legality of our title; it bears the imperial vermillion seal itself. What's more, it includes exclusive rights to the Chon-san River—to do with it what we please. Do you understand that? Exclusive rights! Now how does your Bitsui Company expect to get around that?"

Tsuyama had dropped the wooden clogs and drawn his feet up under him on the seat of the chair for greater comfort. There he sat, a placid and contented Buddha, surveying the white man with the inscrutable Buddha eyes of the unfathomable East. He patted his knees for an instant, seemingly absorbed in deep thought. Then he answered:

"Mista Knowles, sir; my English, excoose once more. I try to make it plain. Korean emperor was—what you call?—crazy for many years. Now Japan Majesty iss own Chosen and iss kick-off Korean emperor because he iss so—crazy. At Seoul, Japan majesty has governor general, has supreme court for Chosen. Supreme court, he will make it so to say things crazy emperor do beforetime are wicked for Chosen—do not stay good to-day before Japan law.

"Understand me, Mista Knowles"—arrant impudence leered from every creasy angle of the Japanese face—"Bitsui Company do not ask supreme court to say American title to Chon-san iss no-good. That would not be nice for cementing relations between two great countries. Bitsui Company only asks supreme court if crazy emperor can give away ribbers. Court say no, he cannot. Then Bitsui Company takes Chon-san Ribber a-bove Chonsan mine. Tha's all."

"Well, did you come away over here to tell Strong that?" Knowles demanded.

"Maybe-so. Also I am come to tell Strong way-out for Chon-san company."

"Well, tell me. I represent Mr. Strong." Knowles' lips were white, and a little muscle on each side of his eyes twitched strangely.

"Ver-ry good, Mista Knowles, sir. This iss way-out. Bitsui Kaisha has ribber; America mine has gold. Gold and no ribber iss no-good; ribber and no gold iss no-good. America mine buys ribber from Bitsui Kaisha or makes shut-down."

He finished smugly, and waited the other's answer, hands on knees, like Buddha. The American, without thought, measured the Jap's eyes, glance for glance, for the space of a breath; then he said very quietly:

"And does Mr. Ichi Tsuyama, of the Bitsui Kaisha, want to know the Americans' 'way-out'?"

"Yiss," said Tsuyama eagerly.

"Well, here it is!"

Like a catamount he sprang from his seat; a single bound carried him almost into the lap of the Japanese. He stooped, gripped the visitor's chair bottom with one hand, and with the other he took a firm grip on Tsuyama's kimono at the shoulder. Up went chair and sitter. Tsuyama's bare legs waved about Knowles' shoulders, and his hands reached, clawlike, for the white man's eyes. Making the door in three strides, Knowles heaved his burden, sprawling, into the dust beyond the step. He leaped back, gathered up the Jap's wooden clogs, and was back at the door before the outraged Tsuyama had picked himself up from the wreck of the chair.

"That's our 'way-out,' you yellow blackmailer!" Knowles bawled, his face

scarlet and his blue eyes blazing like the hot flames of a short-circuited wire. "And here's your 'getters' "—he made two careful shots at the exposed portions of Tsuyama's anatomy with the heavy clogs. "Now trundle your hoop before I have you whipped off the place by coolies!"

The Japanese crouched in the position of a wrestler, and his face was like the war mask of an ancient daimio. His eyes smoked, and his teeth clicked as he gasped for words. Finally he spat syncopated English:

"You—you! Remember, I am Ichi Tsuyama. Back I am coming here soon —to—to cut out your eyes!"

Ten minutes later the assistant manager, standing on the porch of his office, saw four coolies swinging up the trail on the mountainside, a curtained chair on the poles between their shoulders. The American was as grave as a carven idol. He was wondering when the boomerang would swing back and whom it would strike.

CHAPTER IV.

Two days after the summary dismissal of Ichi Tsuyama a runner came over the mountains to Chon-san with a message to Knowles from Strong, at Phyong-yang, the nearest railroad town and three days' travel south of the mines. It read:

Send fifty coolies under one of the boys over to the railroad. Also heavy tackle for pulling, tools for road and bridge building. Will have to tear up all this corner of Korea to get the Pelton to Chon-san; but she's got to come.

Knowles picked the strongest natives in the camp, chose Rogers, the carrot-topped transit man, to convoy the unsavory crew, and wrote a lengthy report of the visit of Ichi Tsuyama, to be taken by Rogers to the manager at the railroad point. When he gave his orders for the hegira, hubbub settled upon the native quarter. Rawboned, diminutive ponies and starved donkeys were hustled out of their corrals and tethered to receive mountain-high burdens of household utensils, bedding, and provender. Stray children were herded together by frantic women and roped in line, by families, to prevent confusion. The coolies, eager as children for a respite from the tasks in shaft and tunnel, arrayed themselves in the well-pounded white of their best raiment, and each mounted to the precipitous height of his donkeyload, there to perch like some monstrous idol of the Buddhistic confraternity of Inferno. Women and children walked. The procession moved to the acclaim of all the idlers of the off shift; it was outlandish as the spring moving of hobgoblins. Up out of the cañon it toiled, showed for a few minutes against a ruined acropolis on the opposite crag, and then was lost to sight.

Four days later a stranger cavalcade moved through the mud-sodden streets of the frowzy village on the railroad. At its head rode Strong on a vicious little pony whose height was hardly sufficient to keep the big American's feet off the ground. Behind him ten great red bullocks, yoked two by two under rough collars of wood, bent their necks to dogged toil; at the far end of the line of beasts rode the great power machine. The huge coil of blue-black metal, stripped of its wooden crating, but lashed over and across by numberless strands of rope, rode upright on a heavy native car, massy as the foundations of a palace. The flaring vent of the machine was to the fore, lifting high over all like some Titan's mouth framed for bellowing. It swayed and rolled with the pitching of the vehicle that bore it.

Close on either side of the pump rode Rogers and that man who gave himself a new name on the morning of his redemption back in Chemulpo. In a motley string behind rode and walked the

coolies and their women and brats, all in a ragtag and bobtail company, boiling with foolish excitement and arrogating much pride to themselves in the staring eyes of the townsfolk.

In the light of Knowles' report upon his interview with the Japanese representative of the Bitsui Kaisha, Strong might have cared to investigate the curtained chair that went swinging out of Phyong-yang on the shoulders of coolies a few hours after the cavalcade had started for Chon-san. But the carriers, following directions, took a circuitous route across paddy fields, swung gradually back to the road ahead of the bullock-drawn car, and then made certain stops at the taverns and hamlets along the countryside at the prompting of the voice behind the curtains. On each occasion of a halt a black, spike-cropped Japanese head was thrust through the curtains and a sinister message of portent was delivered in the vernacular. The burden of it was always the same:

"The foreign devil is coming with a machine to cast a spell over you all. Your bullocks will die, your rice will get the blight, and your children will be born with tails like foxes."

Busily Ichi Tsuyama moved on ahead of the snail's progress of the water wheel—an Oriental Paul Revere redivivus. Ichi Tsuyama, coiled in the narrow confines of the chair like some fat python, smoked innumerable little pipes on his journey and smiled innumerable smiles.

Fruit of his work began to show before the sun went down on the first day of John Strong's personally conducted pilgrimage from Phyong-yang. Ten miles from the railroad, the cavalcade had halted to build a bridge over a particularly soggy and villainous-looking paddy pool. The sun was dropping to an evening mist bank, and the spirit of the weird, such as Korea's own, had begun to settle upon the bizarre landscape. Conical straw roofs of peasants' huts loomed strangely over the shredded land fog like witches' bonnets; from the branches of a gaunt oak—travelers' wayside shrine—wisps of rags and straw rope hung there in votive offering writhed and twisted as the tatters of a gibbeted man in chains. The senseless, ghostly tinkle-tinkle of hidden wind bells—bits of painted glass suspended from boundary posts to appease the lords of the air—gave pulse to the stirring of hidden things in the eventime.

A grumbling, long-drawn trumpet blast sounded from far up the road ahead; then another and another. It was as the fretful ghost call of some unlaid vampire demanding sepulcher. Then lights winked and flared to the rhythm of runners' movements. Came a little sound of jingling metal, the pad-padding of feet on turf.

Bla-a-a-a-a-owp! Again the trumpet, nearer.

"Seems to me some high monkey-monk is on his way," Strong called to Rogers, who was down in the morass directing the bridge builders.

"With bells!" came back the cheery retort out of the gathering dusk. Three torches flashed into view around the bend in the bridle path across the ditch, and their light fell upon the ornamented canopy and flapping curtains of a large palanquin. Six men were running under the weight of the palanquin poles; the three with torches flanked the strange equipage, and ahead of all was a crier with a gourd trumpet, in his left hand an iron staff crusted with flapping metal rings, which gave a tuneful clinking as the staff was shaken.

"Make way for the governor—the governor!" called the flunky with trumpet and staff, and like cats the palanquin carriers took the spindling native bridge across the paddy pool. They suddenly found themselves abreast the looming bulk of the Pelton, its dulled

sides burnished red by the glow of the torches, and they shied like unbroken colts, nearly tipping their burden out of equilibrium. The palanquin curtains were shaken by an internal confusion; they parted, and a clown's head was sharply thrust out. The head was crowned by a sugar-loaf horsehair fly screen, which was tied under the chin by purple ribbons. A white face, fringed about the nether portion by a sparse goat's beard, showed all splashed and shadow-streaked into caricature by the flickering light of the flambeaux.

Bla-a-a-a-owp!

"The governor—the governor!"

Strong strode over to the side of the palanquin and stood stolidly, hands on hips, awaiting an explanation of this unexpected visit of authority.

The governor spoke first, in the Korean *yangban*, or scholar's speech. He addressed himself to the seneschal with the gourd as if relying upon him for translation:

"Tell the foreigner that I, the governor, forbid him to bring his engine of witchcraft another step into my province."

A flicker of surprise crossed the pale face of the official when Strong, without waiting for translation, answered in proper *yangban* speech:

"And why does the governor forbid my taking this necessary piece of mining machinery to the mountains at Chon-san?"

The governor's little eyes snapped, and his thin fingers beat an impatient tattoo on the ebony edge of the litter.

"The governor of Cha-san never explains," he said abruptly. Out of the tail of his eye he watched the faces of Strong's coolies, gathered in a respectful circle behind the palanquin, to mark the effect of his words. Also he cast a surreptitious glance beyond the curtains at the looming machine in the foreground.

"Looks to me, boss, as if you would have to slip him a little velvet. The gov is hungry."

Rogers, hands and legs caked with the mud of the ditch, pushed himself to Strong's side.

"No, this doesn't look like a case of 'squeeze' to me," the manager answered. "The old boy has the fear of the thing deep in him. I'll have to try a little bluff." Then, turning to the pompous mummy in white, and hardening his voice to crisp defiance:

"And supposing I don't stop here at this ditch, but take this 'engine of witchcraft' right on through the province of Cha-san; what then?"

For a minute the *yangban's* eyes strove to battle with the American's level glance, but they were not equal to the test. The governor lifted a petulant hand to his mouth, tugged nervously at his goat beard, searched the gloom with appealing eyes, as if to summon subservient leagues of devils to his aid. It was a new experience to this petrified official to have defiance thrown in his face. He tried to draw his features into heavy lines of authority as he made answer:

"If this devil engine advances one foot more into my territory, I will send runners to Seoul to summon the Japanese soldiers. They are guardians of this nation now."

Strong knew his bluff had been "called," and he regretted having forced the issue to such a declaration. None could realize as keenly as did he with what avidity the Japanese authorities at the capital would welcome the idiotic governor's invitation to interference. Disagreeable complications would pile up in his path if Cha-san's ruler should make good his threat.

"Most excellent governor——"

Strong's speech was stopped in his mouth by the seal of unearthly horror that was suddenly set on the governor's face. He heard a cavernous, lisping moan—a sound seeming to come from

the depths of a well; but the governor's lips were wide in terror; he had not breathed the voice of woe. The eyes goggled in the pasty face. He raised one of his twitching hands and pointed over Strong's shoulder. Strong turned and followed the directing fingers.

Ten feet away, the high-shouldered coil of the water wheel raised itself from the floor of the carrying car, its great bell mouth turned toward the group about the palanquin. In the fitful light of the torches the misshapen mass of metal appeared eerie enough, but there was a something—an added touch of the supernatural that——

Strong cupped his hands over his eyes to shut out the torches' glare, and —yes, there was no doubting it—a faint rime of greenish fairy fire was on the circle of the steel mouth; it fluttered in a great halo around the black throat. A lambent, green-tinged smoke flickered over the pale circle of light, now waxing, now waning, intangible as breath on a mirror.

Again sounded the sibilant breath of pain. It came shudderingly and with ghostly resonance straight out of the fire-touched gullet—the heart cry of ten tons of steel.

An answering yell, high-pitched and crackling in madness! Blazing torches fell from the hands of the governor's bodyguard and were quenched in earth. A shuddering voice, breaking with the supreme agony of terror, called directions through the tight-drawn curtains of the palanquin. A heave; the crazy thing of ebony and gilt was suspended between strong shoulders. A shout; six bearers were skittering over the swaying bridge beyond the pump with the speed of hurrying sprites of the night. Out of the murk their cries and shouts came back in a bedlam chorus.

Strong, catching the infection of panic and sensing the spell of the outré, was striding toward the looming bulk on the car, dark now save for the witchery of green glow about the vent, when he heard a voice—the voice of West—coming from the cavernous maw:

"If you'll give me a hand out of here, I'll report on what the spirits of the Pelton wheel have to say about the governor of Cha-san."

Strong was on the car in a bound, Rogers close behind him. On a level with their shoulders, and framed in the black circle of the vent, were the head and shoulders of the third American. His body was swallowed up in the coil of metal below. As he held out his hands for assistance, Strong noted a block of matches—the old-fashioned sulphur matches still used in Korea exclusively—gripped in one of West's fists. The moist tops of the matches smoked, as did the steel frame about the man's head.

They had him out on his feet in a minute, Strong chuckling with quiet mirth and Rogers guffawing in exuberance. West appeared hesitant, doubting that Strong's favor would follow his initiative.

"I—you see—I thought something had to be done pretty quickly," he stammered. "I remembered once down in Mindanao I did something like this—it was a pretty critical moment there, and it worked—so——"

"West, you ought to make a good mining engineer; you know how to crack obstacles on the head in a hurry." Strong had an approving hand on the other's shoulder. "But you know what this means? It means we'll have to drive this old water wheel across the landscape night and day now until we reach Chon-san. We'll hear no more from our scared friend, the governor; but as sure as little apples he'll have the Jap constabulary up from Seoul on our heels."

"Sort o' joy riding the devil across Korea!" said Rogers.

CHAPTER V.

It was a night of festival at Chonsan. A dance was on in honor of the arrival of the water wheel.

Two days before the great bulk of metal had heaved itself over the cañon wall, under the shadow of the old fortress on the peak, and dropped to the busy valley floor not three hours ahead of a little company of brown men with guns, hurrying up on its back track from Phyong-yang. The brown men halted at the boundary of the American reservation, almost daring to forget their instructions and descend upon this roaring hive of foreign usurpation. With the giant power wheel on its rolling, plunging descent to the mill traveled three white men, who walked like automatons, and in whose hollowed eyes was the light of fever and of a resolve become fetish. Behind them tagged a sorry, bedraggled lot of natives, muscle worn to a limit beyond their most dreadful experience. Strong, swaying on his feet from fatigue and lack of sleep, had seen the machine drawn to a spot convenient for its final installation; then, with his companions, Rogers and West, had slept the clock around. It was while the manager slept that the others in the little colony of exiles arranged the dance.

It was Elsa McClellan who directed willing helpers in the lighting of the lanterns. Butter-fingered youths jumped at her bidding, dripping candle grease on their fancy silk shirts—the shirts of ceremony—cracking jokes at their clumsiness, following the pointing of her plump, capable arm with eyes covertly admiring. From tree to tree outside the cookhouse the mistress of ceremonies passed with her crew of eager retainers, conjuring softly burning red-and-white stars out of the nether darkness to match the sprinkle of cold stars at the tips of the giant pines. She was dressed in a close-fitting gown of black stuff, dissolving at the white throat into little ripples of lace which glowed with the warm color of her flesh. The great coils of her hair, color of sunburned gold, were wound about her brow, plait on plait; they caught the lantern light and turned it back magnified.

In the cookhouse—the long, rough-boarded shack where the white men ate—Jessica Knowles was putting the finishing touches upon the decorations. All tables had been removed and stacked in a shed behind Chung Fow's kitchen. Branches of pine and of laurel were tacked upon the walls to hide the unsightly boards. The pendant electric globes had been petticoated with red tissue paper so that all the interior glowed rosily.

When all was ready a deputation was told off to go fetch Strong, the master of the camp and hero of the Pelton's triumph. Before he arrived, the cookhouse was filled with clamoring, loudly boisterous merrymakers. Old Quartz Miller, his boots greased to an acme polish, and his purple and green cravat of ceremony tightly drawn across his weasand, had his seat aloft on a soap box at the far end of the room, and was fondly tuning up the strings of his black fiddle. Some of the youngsters were making a slide across the candled length of the shack, and down it they sped, balancing, arms waving, hilarious.

Then in came Strong, Rogers at his side, and West, the stranger to the camp, following hesitatingly a pace behind. The manager had donned a rusted frock coat—relic of riotous college extravagance of ten years gone—and down the creamy expanse of his Japanese silk shirt a cherry-colored tie flaunted itself. The red of the tie matched that in his cheeks. The big man grinned foolishly, tried to wave down the cheers that greeted him, and, that failing, attempted to scowl down

his subordinates in mock anger. The younger men crowded around him in frank hero worship, clapped him on the back, shook his hand. Rogers, too, came in for his share of adulation; the brick red of his hair appeared to run like dye down his cheeks to his neck.

West, who had sought long rest immediately after arriving at the camp with the pump, and whom all but two or three in the room now saw for the first time, slipped away from the knot of laughing, shouting men about Strong and Rogers, and made for a deserted corner. Strong saw his retreating back, broke through the crowd about him, and, running swiftly over, caught his arm.

"Oh, no, you don't, son!" he chided, laughing. "Now's when you get your medicine."

Keeping a vise grip on West's arm, Strong pushed a way over to where Quartz Miller held the soap-box throne, unseated him with a playful kick at the chair rungs, and then mounted the box himself.

"Gentlemen—and two ladies!" Strong called in the grandiose air of a county chairman at convention. "I want to introduce to you a new member of this club—Mr. Tom West. He's a friend of mine and a gentleman"—there was a heartening squeeze of Strong's fingers on the other's arm—"and I want to tell you why I think Mr. West'll be a valuable member of our fighting force. Listen!"

Then he told in simple words the story of the governor of Cha-san and the spirit in the water wheel. Roars of laughter greeted the conclusion of the story. There was a shout of "West—West—good boy, West!"

"Now that's the kind of a man I want in Chon-san," bellowed Strong over the din. "That's my kind of a man!"

West looked up for an instant at the face of the big man above him. In his eyes was gratitude beyond speech—all the acknowledgment of a man saved from death heart hungry to own to the debt. The steady gray eyes that met his gave a swift message for his sole understanding: "This much I do gladly for you. The rest is with you—you must not fail."

Then Quartz Miller struck a riotous chord on his fiddle and lifted up a cracked but willing tenor in an old ballad of the Days of Gold.

"Now, there's Sue—Sue—Sue from Susanville,
An' what d' yuh think of she, boy?
She's the darter—the darter—the darter o' Pison Bill;
But to kiss her'd be my joy."

"Oh, to kiss her'd be my joy!" twenty voices roared, and the dance was on.

Jessica Knowles, very pretty in a dainty gown of flowered white, with red ribbons at throat and arm, led off the old-fashioned barn dance with Rogers. Men, escorting partners who simpered and giggled in extravagant counterfeit of feminine graces, galloped to positions, and there swayed and teetered with many a shout and call from set to set.

Elsa McClellan stood in the doorway of the cookhouse, leaning against the jamb and with her head pillowed on the curve of an arm. As the dancers pirouetted near, she smiled and nodded her head in encouragement of their extravagant galloping. Many a youth looked yearningly in her direction. Any one of them would have sacrificed a month's pay envelope, if need be, to dance with her. But the black she wore was denial; for almost a year now it had set her apart, and the men of Chon-san were scrupulous in observation of all the sable garments commanded—scrupulous to the point of reverence.

To her at the door went Strong. He propped an elbow on the clapboards near the curve of her bare arm and

bent his head down to bring his voice to her ear over the scraping of old Quartz's fiddle.

"Elsa——" His tongue stumbled over the word, for he had never before addressed her so. "Elsa, this is a great night for me. I feel—I feel that things couldn't be much better and leave me happy."

She looked up at him with eyes that did not try to conceal admiration—the admiration of woman for a strong man and a doer of big things. Strong hoped to detect something more intimately personal in the gray eyes—possible regard for the man rather than for his deeds. They told him nothing of that.

"The thing that makes hard work easier," he said, groping in characteristic style for words to fit speech that was not technical and of his profession, "is that when somebody pulls off—somebody does a good thing around this camp he's doing it for the whole family and not for himself. This is a great little family we have here—Elsa—two fine women and a couple a' dozen young huskies—Americans all and all pulling together to snatch work out of this God-forgotten Korea. I sometimes think——"

"I love this family of ours," she interjected, her voice thrilling with deep earnestness; "it's all I have—now."

"I sometimes think—I mean I sometimes get the hunch," Strong continued, "that a black time may come when the family's nerve will be put to the torsion test. You know what I mean? It's this way: we're living in a land of shadows and—and—well, things are all around which you don't know about and never can know about until they hit you. Things existed here when your granddaddy and mine pounded each other over the skulls with soup bones—things with the power of—of ages behind 'em. Supposing one of these hell-twisters breaks loose on us some day——"

"We will know how to meet it together," Elsa said simply.

Strong let his hand slip down the door jamb until the tips of his fingers lay on hers. The movement was without design—simple as the joining of children's hands in the dark. She did not pretend not to notice the touch of his fingers; she did not acknowledge that more was meant than appeared by withdrawing her hand. She knew the heart of John Strong, its simplicity.

"Yes," he continued, "we will meet it together, you and I—and all the rest of the family. Only trouble is, you see, it may be one of these things you can't lay your hands on—can't plot out on paper with a table of 'logs.' I can fight a man, or men"—the muscles in the mine manager's propping arm tightened by instinctive reflex—"I can take on anything that comes from the front—so long as I can see it and get my hands on it to put the skids under it; but this blindfold business——"

Strong finished with a shrug of his shoulders that supplied words he could not put his tongue on.

"I thought you said you were happy to-night—boss." In Elsa's mouth the camp sobriquet, given in affection, seemed to Strong to possess something almost akin to a caress. He laughed exultantly.

"I sure am; but I've got a sort of cussed streak in me that makes me howl at something I can't see, like a dog. I do this when I'm most happy. You might call it coppering the joy if you knew anything about faro. You see I was born in an earthquake year back in California, and—well, there's something in my make-up that makes me smell trouble when I'm really feeling happiest. Now to-night——"

"Switch your pa'dners for th' next dance!" came the booming call of Quartz Miller from his soap-box throne. "Which will be a mazourkey, catch-as-catch-can."

There was a scramble by all the youngsters about Jessica Knowles, the single treasure to be dispensed by the god of luck. Cheeks aglow with excitement, hair tousled by the rough camaraderie of the dance, she laughingly lined her would-be partners in a row and counted them down by the eminently just decision of eeny-meeny-miney-mo. Daniels was the lucky one. He whirled her away before the eyes of the envious. Elsa, watching the progress of elimination with a smile on her lips, caught a significant flash from Jessica's eyes as she swept past. In the space of a breath a question passed between them and was answered, all in the lifting of an eyebrow, the nodding of a pretty head. It had to do with the code of Mrs. Grundy and how to placate that captious dame even though seeming to flount her.

"Boss?" She looked squarely into Strong's eyes as her voice lingered ever so lightly on the upward inflection.

"Elsa."

"Will you do something for me—something not half so hard to do as bringing the water wheel from Phyong-yang?"

"Yes, anything. Why, for you I'd——"

"Then dance with me—just this once."

The coils of sunburned gold were laid against Strong's cherry-flaming tie almost before the words were spoken, and he felt her hand in his. An instant his feet were riveted to the floor; then——

"Will I!" he almost shouted, and he had her flying down the length of the candled floor in the thick of the dancers. A shout went up. Men who had been prancing with arms about one another's waists stopped to stare. Even Quartz Miller dropped a bar before he could regain his musical equilibrium.

"Three cheers for Elsa McClellan!" a voice piped, and they were given with a zip. Chon-san knew then that her dark hours were past and that for all the camp, as well as for this woman who had borne her grief with simple heroism, a new day had come.

Quartz, on his throne, made the music throb with new zest; feet pounded harder on the floor of the cookhouse, voices attuned to barber-shop chords accompanied the rhythmic swaying of the dancers.

A cry, like a voice out of the pit—confusion at the door—sound of frantically scurrying feet, and then a thing in white, bereft of all reason save the power to fear, catapulted through the door. For an instant the ghostly shape wavered, starting eyes searching the labyrinth of the dancers' figures; then they fell upon John Strong. At him the wraith from the dark hurled himself, dropped at the white man's feet, and there groveled. As the Korean rolled in abasement of terror a common native rice-wine jug, long of neck and squat of body, fell from his grasp and bobbed a little to one side. It lay with lip to floor, and a thick cloud of red-brown smoke guttered out of its spout, crept heavily along the boards like a fat, poisonous serpent.

"Emmi—Emmi—Emmi!" The native shrieked his woe, covering his eyes with the dirty hem of his skirt to shut out the sight of the curling smoke snake. The Americans closed about Strong and the native, their eyes wide in the thrust of surprise. Jessica Knowles had her head on her husband's shoulder, sobbing in incipient hysteria. Elsa McClellan was bending over the Korean, trying to soothe him by soft words in the vernacular.

The ragamuffin sat up, pointed wildly at the smoking jug, and shouted in a frenzy:

"Tokgabi! Tokgabi!" (Goblin! Goblin!)

As if in answer to his cry came from outer dark the sudden harsh bray of

cymbals and the sullen, growling beat of the Korean drum; voices in strident falsetto chant were added. The chant was in the minor, pitched to the key and tempo of horrid fear.

The moment was one dropped out of the weird instinct of savage mystery. Out from the tomb of its dead self from the savage, ghost-haunted mountains and fens where tigers whelped—Korea stretched a hand to lay it upon the hearts of impudent strangers.

CHAPTER VI.

It was Strong who first broke the tension of the moment. He stooped, lifted the smoking jug from the floor, and for an instant held his nose near the fuming spout.

"Concentrated nitric," he grunted. "No wonder it smokes!

"Here, you!" He stirred the babbling coolie with the toe of his boot as he addressed him sharply in the vernacular. "Where did you get this—this smoke maker?"

"Oh, master!" The groveling creature on the floor raised his head, and, catching sight of the fluid rope emerging from the jug, shivered anew. "Oh, master, all—all the wine jugs smoke to-night. The devils have entered them. I brought mine to you to see, master."

A scowl of puzzlement settled on the face of the mine manager. He turned questioning eyes to the faces of his men about him.

"Come on, boys!" he called. "We'll have to look into this—and stop this devil business before it goes too far."

As the dancers crowded to the cookhouse door and looked out into the dark in the direction of "Pigtown," the native quarters, they could see the eerie play of lights among the squat shapes of the distant huts; torches flared intermittently; the little white hand lanterns of the Koreans skipped and dodged among the shadows like pale glowworms. Ever the minor drone of the chanting rose and fell, rose and fell; the *bom-bom-bom* of the inciting drums pulsed through the night. Pigtown was boiling with excitement.

Strong tapped West on the shoulder as the latter was crowding out of the door.

"You stay with the ladies," he commanded. "We never leave them alone here, you know, and on a night like this when the Koreans get stirred up ——" He did not finish, for Elsa McClellan had come into earshot.

West dropped back, a little reluctantly; on his face was the half-mortified look of a man who suddenly finds himself in a trust he deems himself unworthy of. Strong, pushing the coolie messenger of terror ahead of him and followed by the young men of the Chon-san family, strode off into the dark. They were soon at the scene of ghostly confusion.

On the hard-baked street bisecting the native quarters a dozen wine jugs set in a row were smoking like miniature factory chimneys; their raw, red disgorgings hung low and crawled along the ground. In an oval about the fuming vessels more than a hundred white shapes squatted in the light of torches, like so many foolish penguins in congress; out of the doors of the flanking huts heads of timorous women and children popped occasionally, and were suddenly drawn back in fear. At one end of the oval of intercessors with the powers of evil sat the musicians—men with heavy drums between their feet who pounded the double heads of sheepskin with the heels of their palms. All followed in refrain the treble screeching of a toothless hag in rags—the *mutang,* or professional devil layer of the camp—who stamped back and forth before the line of fuming wine bottles in a frenzy of motion.

Strong, swinging at free stride and with a black look of anger on his face,

pushed through the nearest fringe of howling spectators, strode down the charmed space to the row of jugs, and carefully crunched each smoking thing under his heel. Gouts of the red smoke jetted up about his legs, and the ground, strewn with the shards, gave off exhalations of the poisonous fumes. Without ceremony, the big man grasped the *mutang* by the slack of her rags and sent her headlong into the nearest group of coolies. A startled shout had greeted his irruption; a moan of terror followed his smashing of the bewitched jugs; cries of fear and hasty scramblings puctuated his catapulting of the sorceress. With merciless toe and fist, the manager laid about him, bowling over the squatting coolies, sending them scampering behind doors. In his anger, Strong was a far more tangible demon than any haunting the wine jugs; one to be respected out of deep experience. His path was devastation; his hand was heavy.

The Number One man, or foreman of the coolie gang, felt the grip of the manager's fingers on his topknot and howled.

"You Chang! You little fox cat, what's the meaning of all this chin-chin business?"

The Number One man groveled.

"Master—it is the devils in the wine jugs. To-night—ten—twelve—fifteen wine jugs—when the men go to drink make a smoke. As soon as the stoppers are out, master, the devil smoke it comes."

Rogers, Daniels, and the others were at Strong's elbow now. Strong turned an inquiring eye upon them.

"It's a trick," said Rogers. "Somebody's trying to hurl a scare into 'em. But what coolie would know enough to start anything like this—get the acid out of the assay office and fill up the wine jugs? No Korean would dare monkey with the stuff. I—I wonder."

"Find a Jap, Strong, and you'll land the one who turned the trick." Knowles, the quiet-spoken, put in his word.

Strong was just turning to answer him when there came a wild yell from the direction of the shaft house—another and another. A noise of running feet, and then down the street of Pigtown streamed a disheveled crew of scarecrows, perhaps fifty in all. Seeing Strong and the other white men standing between the rows of mud burrows, the vanguard of the flying sprites wavered for an instant, then ducked like rabbits into the nearest doorways. Cries came, muffled, through mud walls.

"The night shift from shaft No. 2!" yelled Strong, and he started at a run for the distant loom of the shaft house. Midway he met Roberts, boss of the night toilers in tunnel No. 2; the young giant was fuming.

"Quit me, by thunder!" he stammered. "Whole bunch simply dropped work and streaked it for the cage—couldn't be hoisted fast enough. Tried to hammer a few into staying below, but no go. Not a man left on three-hundred level!"

Strong seized his night-shift boss roughly by the shoulders and shook him in his excitement.

"Nitric in their wine jugs?" he shouted.

"Don't know. Only know there was a devil of a row when they knocked off for the half-hour feed. Man dropped his jug and streaked it past me, yelling, 'Devils! Devils!' at the top of his lungs. All the rest swarmed after him."

"Daniels—North—Rogers!" Strong began to give orders to his young men incisively, tersely. After the first lethargy of surprise and puzzlement, he was now the man of action, dynamic, compelling. To the three-hundred-foot level of shaft No. 2; to the assay office, where the carboys of nitric were stored; to the mill, whose idle stamps awaited

the return of deserting crews, and where the cyanides and other chemicals were used, he sent his assistants; the search for clews to the identity of the devil doctor was to be thorough. Strong and Knowles remained in Pigtown. With the Number One man in tow, they visited one hovel after another, patiently trying to sweep away the webs of terror from the minds of the doltish coolies.

Back in the deserted cookhouse, meanwhile, the strain of this hour weighed heavily upon the two women of Chon-san and the man calling himself Tom West. All three were shaken by the bizarre interruption that had come to the dance. For West the situation was doubly trying. The nightmare of that street in Chemulpo—the harrying mob and himself prone under the scorning heels of the Japanese—was fresh on him. Yes, and another horror known only to himself: those blank pages in his life upon which never could be written a chronicle of shame, the story of hiatus between place of dignity and the gutter in Chemulpo. How swift the fall; what its incidents; how complete the abasement of a man's soul —of these things no record remained. He only knew that at a certain time in a certain city on the China coast he had raised the first cup to his lips; that at another time he was well-nigh beaten to death in the kennels of a barbarous town a thousand miles away. Now in the presence of these two women—women of his kind, or of the kind he had once been—West felt a great mortification and an abysmal sense of humiliation.

Upon the hurried exit of Strong and the other men, West lingered by the open door, knowing not what to do—how to comport himself in the presence of Jessica Knowles and Elsa McClellan. He dared no advances, trusted himself not even to the little commonplaces that bridge new-made acquaintanceship. His position there as guardian of these two women was intolerable. But to him came the one with the great masses of sunburned gold crowning her brow—she who had danced with Strong so gloriously. And her lips were smiling.

"Mr. West," she said, "we have given you a typical introduction to Chon-san to-night. Life here has its little surprises, as you see. If that were not so we would all perish of ennui, I fear."

"Elsa, dear, how can you speak so lightly of this thing? My heart is still on the jump." Jessica paused in her aimless pacing of the floor and running to and from windows to throw this protest over her shoulder.

"I—I am a stranger in Korea," West faltered, "and this is all—very interesting. I've heard the natives are very superstitious and——"

"And you took glorious advantage of your information in the water wheel's mouth," Elsa was quick to put in, with a laugh. "That was wonderfully clever of you—saved the day for our boss, I am sure. Where did you learn that trick with the phosphorus?"

West hesitated for an instant. Though he willed that his eyes should not meet the steady hazel eyes that looked so frankly up to him, he could not govern them.

"Why—one time down in Mindanao —in Misamis," he began, then stopped short. Here was something of the past —something not to be talked about. But the words had gone.

"Oh, you have been in Mindanao!" Jessica turned from a window and came up to where Elsa and West were standing. "You were in the army, then? Of course; nobody who's not in the army has any business there."

A quick flush mounted the man's cheeks. His tongue refused to frame an answer. Elsa's quick eye caught the signs of West's confusion, and she

hastened to cover over his embarrassment.

"And the people there—the Moros," she asked; "were they as superstitious as our friend the governor of Cha-san?"

West flashed an unconscious look of gratitude at the girl.

"As superstitious, yes; but they didn't run like the governor did."

"Oh, why don't they come back! The dance will be spoiled by that horrid old smoking wine jug." Jessica fidgeted, went from door to window, and back to door again. She suddenly discovered a lantern that threatened to ignite and hurried out of the cookhouse door to mend it.

Elsa, sitting beside West on one of the rude benches near the door, carried forward conversation. She did this with delicacy and in a manner that seemed to lay no burden of forwardness upon her. Gradually the outcast beside her felt his reticence slipping from him. He was keenly alive to the fact that his companion was shouldering all the work of initiating friendship, and was doing it, too, in a gentle spirit of regard for his reserve. She told him of life at Chon-san; of its grayness a little; of the brightness every member of "the family" strove to create, much. Unconsciously as the girl spoke of Strong, the boss, of his indomitable courage and will to do against all obstacles, her voice took on a velvety timbre different from that of her usual speech, and West, noting this, felt suddenly sick in spirit again. So a woman's eyes were raised to a strong man—a strong man! Always it was thus!

"The boss, you see, is the father of the camp," she was saying. "His heart is big enough to take all of us in—and all of us need fathering. Fair is John Strong, and honest with himself—and with us. He fights with his fists and in the open; he hates an enemy in the dark. I am afraid that now—now when Chon-san faces an enemy who only fights in the dark, the boss will be bewildered—will not know how to strike back. The Japanese, you know; they are closing in on us; they want this property, but they do not dare try to take it openly. Oh"—she lifted her broad, capable shoulders as if to ward off the blow of an invisible hand—"they are terrible, those Japanese; they creep in like a fog, and before you are aware they have you buried. They are different from our kind; they are not men—just thinking machines with legs."

"But the title to Chon-san," West interposed. "Surely you must have something to work on here."

"Listen," she answered, and then she told him the tale of Chon-san and of how John Strong had led his pioneers into a strange land to battle, first with the blind spirit of fatalism in the natives, and then with the far more dangerous craft of the new predatory masters of the land. She recited the event of the original grant from the doddering old emperor of the Koreans, secured by an adventurous American prospector; the bitter man work Strong, as manager of an unexplored hole in the mountains, had achieved in dragging his machinery and materials for the camp over the mountains from the railroad; the coming of her husband and herself in the first band of the exiles. How Strong had conjured order out of the chaos of wilderness, set up his stamps, and began to wrest treasure from the ribs of the mountains; how, when the war with Russia was over, the first Japanese spies of plunder had come down over the spine of the range, seen and coveted the work of the white men; what were the covert moves by the new masters in Seoul to drive little wedges into the title of Chon-san—these details made the burden of her story.

"Then, after the protectorate, America withdrew her minister from Seoul," she finished, "and the boss was left

alone—alone, and fourteen thousand miles from Washington. His cry for help cannot carry fourteen thousand miles. Washington is too busy protesting friendship for Tokyo to heed even if it heard. And now—and now; why, the first of the invaders came while you were wrestling the water wheel across country—came to threaten. And this to-night—this magic in a wine jug; it must be a trick. Another stab in the dark; that's all."

For a minute there was silence between them, then:

"I'm glad I'm here," the man said in a grave, strained voice. "It—will do me good to—to fight with a strong man."

"Yes," Elsa answered. "It has made me stronger—better. It will make you stronger, better—to fight by the side of John Strong."

CHAPTER VII.

Dawn came upon a silent camp. The roar of the stamps was stilled; from the hoists no shrill scream; no ore car spilled its contents with crashing rattle; all the thousand and one crude voices of machines at toil were hushed. All Chon-san was paralyzed. The shadow of a great fear had laid hand on every witless native; they skulked in their hovels and would not come out.

Strong, abroad all night in Pigtown, and to no purpose, called a council of the family in the cookhouse at the breakfast hour. There, ringed about the oilcloth, were his young men, the eager, restless devotees of the gospel of work: Rogers, of the flaming hair; Daniels, the ever-smiling; Roberts, with his shoulders of a line bucker; North, the farmer lad from Sacramento wheat fields, turned miner. Knowles, of the bleached hair and the china-blue eyes that smiled so steadily, sat at Strong's right; near him West, the newcomer. On every face was reflection of the worry that stamped itself on Strong's. The manager opened the council by pounding with a heavy coffee cup on a near-by sugar bowl.

"Boys," he said, and his voice was heavy with fatigue and apprehension, "it looks as if we were up against it unless we can find the man who played this trick with the wine jugs—show the trick up to the coolies so's they'll know it wasn't the devils. They're all on the point of stampeding from camp. Another jolt, and they'll be flying over the mountains like scared turkeys. I've been up all night talking to them—and I might have talked to the old fort up there on the mountain for all the good it did. Now what can we do?"

For a minute silence; none cared to pose as authority where the boss' ingenuity and resource had failed. Then spoke Knowles:

"It's a Jap trick; that Tsuyama I threw out of the office the other day is getting busy. The first move of the Bitsui crowd to put a crimp in us, I say."

"Sure; that's the only explanation," Strong answered. "Friend Tsuyama knows his Korean, and just where to hit him hardest. But how did he work it? He couldn't hire a Korean to do the trick when it was planned to throw such a fear into his own countrymen. Anyway, no coolie will handle concentrated nitric unless he's forced to. The acid came from our own assay office; Daniels here discovered last night that a carboy of the stuff had been tampered with."

"Then it was somebody working in the camp," Rogers suggested, "who knew where the nitric was kept."

"But we haven't any Japs on the place," Strong objected. "The Koreans wouldn't work five minutes if I should put a Jap alongside of them."

"Might be one of those Fusan-born Japs," Knowles broke in. "Every Jap in Fusan knows Korean as well as he

does his own language, and if he had a topknot——"

"Well, there you are!" Strong threw out both hands in a hopeless gesture. "Supposing we had a Jap in the camp who was clever enough to disguise his race from the Koreans he's working side by side with—and he'd have to be a wonder to do that—how can we white men hope to spot him?"

"I—I think there is one way." It was West, the new man, who began timidly, as if feeling presumption. "Down in the Philippines where the Jap spies are pretty common, and on the Russian side in the war, when the Japs disguised themselves as Chinamen, a sure test was discovered. Look at the toes. The Japs, you know, are the only people in the world that wear clogs; they put them on their babies as soon as they begin to walk. The thong passes between the big toe and the others and forces the big toe apart from the rest. And there it stays through life, even if they wear shoes later. No Jap can make his big toes lie close to the second; he simply cannot control the muscles. Now, if——"

West suddenly halted, as if a realization of his forwardness in offering advice to these doers of big things had tied his tongue. Strong, his elbows on the table, was leaning eagerly forward to catch West's words; the others about the table were stiffened in expectancy.

"Go ahead!" the manager commanded.

"Well—if it were possible to line up all of your coolies—our coolies—and take a look at their feet—— It sounds absurd, I know; yet I believe we could spot the man responsible for last night's trick."

"Boys!" Strong heaved himself up from his place on the benches. "West's got it right—got the goods! We'll find that Jap before another hour's up. Everybody to Pigtown!"

They leaped to their feet, jubilant, filled with the subtlety of West's scheme. Boyishly they slapped him on the back; called him "Sherlock"; hailed him as "the man with the toe." As for West, the moment was a wondrous one. The praise of these clear-eyed fighting men was wine to him; their acceptance of him as one with them, with "the family" in the strong bond of labor kinship and fellowship of effort, came as a heartening draft of water in his desert of abasement. He was in the fight! Aye, he was a man at man's work once more!

From the cookhouse, the white men trooped over to Pigtown, a score of them. Strong sought the Number One man. He told the foreman he was not going to do harm to any of the Koreans; he merely wanted to talk to them all and explain the presence of the spirits in the jugs. Number One man would order all men and boys in the quarter out to the street, Strong dictated.

The head coolie did his bidding with alacrity; he passed down the single long lane between the double row of Pigtown's dwellings, chanting a shrill message at the top of his voice. Like timorous rabbits, the natives began to appear, dodging half-heartedly out from their doors and back again. As they assembled in the middle of the street, Strong's men piloted them kindly and with many protestations of safety into two long lines, one behind the other. Two of the white youths made a house-to-house search for stragglers; when these reluctant ones were stood in line fully two hundred native men were on parade—two hundred scarecrows. The white men ranged themselves at intervals behind the natives, vigilant file closers to the formation in anticipation of possible contingency. Strong stood out before them all and spoke in the Korean.

"Men of Chosen," he began, using the native appellation for foreign-styled

Korea, "you have all been deceived by a trick. The smoking wine jugs last night were a trick. See, I do the same thing you believe the devils did—before your eyes and in the daylight."

He brought out from a hip pocket a small flask of white glass; a watery liquid filled it to half measure. He pulled off the metal cap and held the flask high above his head. Dense brown fumes wreathed slowly from the flask mouth as the acid within was exposed to the air. A murmur passed down the double line of coolies; there was a stirring in the ranks. Strong's heavy voice was raised again in the barbarous speech:

"But you were tricked by a monkey face—by a *Nipponjin*. And the man who did the trick is standing among you now—he is one of you!"

A surprised muttering buzzed through the ranks. Heads were twisted, and men eyed other men in sudden suspicion.

"Now if you will stand where you are I will pick out the *Nipponjin* and give him over to you. Every man kick off his shoes."

This last order sent a greater shock of surprise down the line of doltish faces. What madness was this foreign master up to? Was he going to steal their shoes while he had them surrounded by his white-faced helpers? Some demurred and showed signs of breaking ranks.

"Off with those shoes!" Strong thundered, and with a rustling and skidding four hundred grass-woven sandal shoes were sent flying ahead of as many calloused feet.

"Now, West," the big man in khaki said, and, accompanied by the newest member of the Chon-san family, he began slowly passing down the wondering line of coolies, as an inspecting officer reviews a regiment on parade. The two walked with their eyes down, carefully noting the conformation of each dusty, brown foot. The giants with the faces of children, who were passive parties to this outlandish procedure, followed the movements of the two white men with eyes wide in surprise; then, before a dozen men had been passed, one more sharp-witted than the rest guessed the object of Strong's maneuver and lifted his voice in a high cackle.

"The monkey face has a foot like a bull!" he called to all the double rank. "*Nipponjin* cannot hide his feet!"

Instant comprehension followed. Down the double line there was a great stirring and twisting of bodies. Each giant oaf stared first at his feet and then at his neighbor's. Excited calls passed from mouth to mouth. Tension was high. Strong and West continued imperturbably pacing down the front rank, their eyes searching for the splayed toe. Of a sudden came a shout from the far end of the rear file of coolies. A hurly-burly of bodies there, then out popped the thin shape of a man. He ran, bent almost double; he sped like a lance down the single road of Pigtown for the mountain trail at its end.

"*Ha-ai! Ha-ai!*" The whole pack of Koreans gave chase, crowding, stumbling, somersaulting one over the other. Daniels and Rogers, who happened to be nearest the spot whence the fugitive had broken ranks, were sprinting in the van of the pursuing natives.

"*Ha-ai! Ha-ai!*" The hunting cry rang weird as a loon's call, and the cañon wall hurled it back. Up the trail plunged the fleeing figure in white; up pursued a dozen shock heads, leaping like seals. But Rogers was fleetest. The watchers in the street saw him lance himself in a flying tackle, fold his arms about the knees of the runner, and bring him down. They rolled in the fern together. The nearest of the pursuing Koreans threw themselves headlong onto the twain, locked in a vicious grap-

ple; there was a brief struggle, then the mass dissolved, and out of it appeared the American holding the fugitive in a strangle grip by the slack of his shirt at the throat.

So Rogers marched his prize in triumph down the trail. The Koreans, rushing up to meet him, surrounded him and his prisoner in a beating surf of white; they howled and mouthed in an access of fury. Strong strode into the pack, beating down menacing fists with flaillike strokes of his arm. North, Daniels, West, and the other white men closed in around the culprit to guard him. Once back on the village street, Strong halted the jumbled procession.

He looked down at the feet of the brown man, who stood rigid under the compulsion of the tightened bands of cotton about his throat. The big toe of each stood out and away from the others—branched away from the foot like a sport shoot on a tree.

The manager of Chon-san quickly raised his eyes to the face of the prisoner, a smiling triumph in them. A mask there—a dull copper mask of unmoving line and unwinking eye, inscrutable, impervious; no flicker of fear, nor even show of bravado, was there. It was the face of Buddha, coarsened albeit set in the mold of unapproachable aloofness. Strong's hand went to the bundle of hair skewered on the crown of the head by an amber hairpin, Korean fashion. He gave the topknot a smart jerk. It came away in his hand, leaving a mass of coarse, black hair to fall about the man's face. A gasp from the pressing crowd of natives at this revelation of the speciousness of a sacred ornament.

"So, *Nipponjin,* you are playing the Bitsui Company's little game, eh?" he said in the Korean vernacular. "Who sent you to do this—Tsuyama?"

Not a word; not a flicker of an eyelash. The Japanese looked into the white man's face still with inscrutable eyes.

"You'd better answer, *Nipponjin,*" Strong threatened, his face darkening under the cold insolence of the other's stare. "You heard me promise to turn you over to these Koreans here, and you know what that will mean. I'll do it if you don't answer me. Who sent you here—Tsuyama?"

The face of the Japanese was still a copper mask, graven for all time in a set stare of indifference. Strong, furious, suddenly swung his open palm against the placid face.

"Can't you speak?" he roared. The man staggered back, recovered himself, then drew himself up rigidly once more before the towering figure of the white man, arms folded on chest. His eyes, half veiled, were fixed on Strong's face.

A sharp sucking in of breath whistled about the circle of the Koreans. Strong's cheeks suddenly burned a fiery red before the triumphing passivity of this yellow man. That blow had set this man apart in the eyes of two hundred natives—a man not afraid of punishment. He turned to Rogers and gruffly commanded him.

"Take this man to the top of the trail and put him off the concession," he said. "Don't let the Koreans lay a hand on him." Then he turned back to the prisoner and spoke slowly in the vernacular once more:

"Go back to Ichi Tsuyama. Tell him you did your work well, but that no more of your kind can come to Chon-san. Tell Ichi Tsuyama, also, that John Strong can learn to fight in the dark—if he has to. Now go!"

The Japanese, still mute, turned to follow Rogers' guiding up the trail that zigzagged to the top of the mountain wall back of the settlement. Several of the Koreans started to crowd around him; but, by a sharp word, Strong hailed them back.

"Get to your work!" he shouted, so

that all could hear. "Every man not working in fifteen minutes gets a fifty-chon cut on pay day."

They scuttled like white beetles, madly and in a dozen directions. To the shaft house, where the skip waited to drop the tunnel drivers down into the dark; to the mill; up onto the broad road slashed out of the flank of the mountain, laughing and calling, scattered these giants with the faces of children—like boys on a school holiday. Soon began the crash—crash—crash of the stamps in the mill, thunderous pulse of the camp's labor; then the scream of the hoist and the clatter of the quartz dumped onto the "grizzly"; sobbing of steam in exhaust; cry of cable over pulley—all the multifarious discords in the oratorio of Chon-san's triumph. The camp was at work, but John Strong, standing on the steps of his office, followed with a troubled eye the shape of something white that passed back and forth against the face of the mountain, climbing up to the boundary of Chon-san—and to the beyond of Japan.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two men sat over after-dinner cordials in the lounge room of the Seoul Club. The elder of them, a man in the indefinite thirties, sallow of cheek and indolent of speech in the manner of his kind, was giving the younger man a primer lesson in the life and customs of the land. The mentor's name was Jerrold Bronson-Tighe. He was an Englishman of many years' residence in the treaty ports up and down the China coast, a journalist in all the essence that term carries on the English tongue, a man thoroughly acquainted with the oblique world that lies west of the one hundred and eightieth parallel. Standard type of the son of Albion who finds his living among the browns and yellows of Asia was Bronson-Tighe: coolly self-sufficient, imperious toward the colored skin, and mildly patronizing to those of his own race, ready with bluff and bullying to carry himself over ticklish ground. He would as soon think of appearing in a public place after six o'clock in his sleeping kimono as in any other than the proper dinner jacket or formal evening clothes. In common with all his class, he looked upon all Americans as "bounders" until they proved themselves gentlemen, and he set them down in a category with the "colonials" of his own government.

Decidedly a "bounder" was Peter Haddon, his guest for the evening; a "bounder," yes, because he "guessed" and said "get you" and used all those other vulgar Americanisms. He was a "griffin" besides; "griffin" being the Far Eastern synonym for the tenderfoot of the American West. Very much of a griffin, indeed, was Peter Haddon, for this was his first night in Korea; he had crossed from Japan to Fusan and come to the capital by rail just in time to be the guest of Bronson-Tighe for eight-o'clock dinner. The freshness and griffin quality of Peter Haddon, which jarred a trifle the delicate sensibilities of Bronson-Tighe, are worth noting here. Twenty-eight or thereabouts, of a lean and nervous build, thin and freckled face, and with restless, ever-searching eyes, the young man's whole being expressed a dynamo geared to top speed, yet running with well-oiled smoothness. There was something in the falconlike set of his eyes and the poise of his head always a little forward that revealed a tremendous inquisitiveness; Peter Haddon seemed ever poised for a pounce upon a fleeing fact.

Falconing for facts was, in truth, Haddon's trade. He was, and had been for seven full years, a working newspaper man—not a journalist. In that time he had reported every variety of incident in life's comedy. Now he was

come as representative of the Consolidated Press, to fill the post of correspondent in Seoul. A roving commission had been Haddon's to observe and report the trend of Japan's activity in Korea, which she was steadily assimilating, and in Manchuria, her second experiment ground for appropriation. Seoul, forgotten of all the world, was to be his headquarters.

An element of embarrassment above all that of the first day in a strange land was added to Haddon's meeting with Bronson-Tighe, for their relations were those of supplanter and supplanted. The Englishman, who had been correspondent of the Consolidated Press in Seoul for the three years following the Russian war, had been advised of the American's coming and told to report to the London office as soon as his successor should know the ropes of the new position.

Haddon had come to Korea knowing that his predecessor had been recalled, but unaware of the reason why. From the minute Bronson-Tighe met him at the railroad station outside South Gate the Englishman's attitude had been one of studied patronizing, coldly punctilious, but rasping to the self-respect of the stranger. He had, by a word here and there, given Haddon to understand that for more than a year he had been applying for furlough home—"a bit of chumming with jolly chaps over ale and cheese at the Savage, you know; man needs bucking up after three years in this heathen hole." Haddon had been sent out by the Consolidated for the express purpose of allowing a worthy worker this bit of chumming after commendable toil, so the late incumbent of the Seoul post would have the newcomer understand. The keen eyes of the American news collector batted not once at the elaborately constructed defense for the Englishman's pride; he recognized the hall mark of bluff at the very first words.

Now they sat in a corner of the lounge room at the club—pitiable little haven of the marooned foreigners in the grand mud heap of Seoul.

"Of course you understand, my dear fellow, none of your American methods of rush go over here," drawled Bronson-Tighe as he held his *petite verre* of cassis to the light and studied the burning heart of the fluid. "You cannot drive the news in Seoul—or anywhere west of Honolulu; you have to sit and wait for it to come to you."

"Brought on a platter?" Haddon queried, with a faint smile.

"Eh? Oh, I see; served, you mean." The Englishman's eyebrows came down again; of course, one had to be tolerant with these American rotters. "You might say as much. There is no news here but Japanese news—none to count, that is. One has to wait until the Japanese are ready to allow the news to be printed. One cannot jog them along or hurry them in the least, you know, or they'd shut down on one. Positively they would."

"You mean an effort would be made to prevent one's getting any news if one did not take what was given when it was ready to be given?" He put the question incredulously.

"Right you are, my dear Mr. Haddon. You must play the game here—play the game, I say. You're a long way from—ah, your Broadway; you're thrown back on yourself, you see—have nobody but yourself to buck you up in any fight you may be tempted to put up. You don't count a little bit here in Seoul; no white man counts a little bit. You can't get the least bit cocky before you discover some little brown man is laughing at you—just laughing, that's all. They play a jolly little game of heads I win, tails you lose when it comes to allowing a foreigner to discover what is passing in the back of their heads. But the government crowd at the residency is not a bad sort after

you know how to rub the fur the right way there—not a bad sort when you're playing the game with them; but if you try any tricks—have a care! Remember deportation is only one of the lesser punishments they can hand you with a smile. They're glad enough to have the news go out from Seoul, provided it is their brand of news, stamped 'Safe' with Prince Ito's own seal."

To Haddon, but three weeks away from home and plumped into this last untouched wilderness of all Asia, where black was white, wrong was right, and the moon undoubtedly was made of green cheese, the Englishman's exposition of the ways of the news was anything but cheering. He strongly suspected that Bronson-Tighe was deliberately emphasizing the high lights of difficulty. But struggle as he would against the acceptance of the Englishman's dicta, Haddon began to feel closing over his head implacable shutters of iron. The feel of the land—the aura of something grim and intangible and menacing—was clamping down on him.

Men from the dining room and the billiard tables began to drop into chairs about the shoddy lounge—men for the most part strangely silent and with hard, lined faces. To some of these Bronson-Tighe introduced Haddon with a careless, "He's just in, you know; come to take my place with the Consolidated while I'm off on furlough." A Frenchman with a heavy spade beard, a rotund and deep-voiced Teuton with a face all chopped and scarred by Heidelberg honors, a sad-eyed Briton who said only "Aouw!" in acknowledging introductions—a dour and unlovely company of exiles they were, striving dully to find a common ground of comradeship in the oasis of the club.

The American consul general, sole representative of his country in Korea since the withdrawal of the minister at the establishment of Japan's protectorate, was one to acknowledge Bronson-Tighe's introduction with something more than perfunctory courtesy. He gripped Haddon's hand cordially and sat down with an eager air that bespoke pleasure in the meeting.

The American correspondent's quick eye appraised the consul general. Henry T. Bostell was a small man, withered prematurely, like a shrub badly used by the sun. His thinning sandy hair went back from his lightly seamed forehead in a hurried, deferential cowlick; his pale-blue eyes held partnership with a thin, sensitive mouth in a continuous evasion of anything promising embarrassment or trouble to Henry T. Bostell.

"It is good to meet a newcoming American in Seoul," Bostell said, as he passed his cigarette case to Bronson-Tighe and Haddon in turn. "We are so few, you see, and we count for so very little in this Land of Nowhere. Quite outshadowed by our English cousins." This with a little laugh and a wave of the hand at Bronson-Tighe. "As noble allies of—of the conquerors, the English, of course——"

"That grind about 'noble allies' is barred at the club, Bostell," the Englishman put in sharply. "Drat it all, man! do you think just because a cheeseparing government at home hooks it up with Japan to save India every Englishman in the East is going to relish being a 'noble ally' to a moon-eyed Billikin? How about your own 'brown brother' in the Philippines?"

Haddon chuckled. Here was still a new light on things Far Eastern not known at home. The consul general rattled on:

"The only Americans in Korea who count for anything are buried up at Chon-san—where the tigers live. Now *there's* a crowd of men——"

"Rotters!" Bronson-Tighe viciously snapped the ash off his cigarette. "Don't tell this griffin, Bostell, you're proud of that brute Strong; don't hold him up as a shining light in a dark

land. A trickster and a manhandler, and a low fellow all round!"

"But, my dear Bronson-Tighe, you must admit that he does things," Bostell murmured.

"Quite right; he blusters and bullies and kicks coolies around with a heavy boot. But I have a proper notion his last kick has been kicked—and it struck the wrong person. Tsuyama, of the Bitsui Kaisha, you know, went up there a fortnight ago to tell Strong he'd have to come to some settlement on that fraudulent title he holds to the mining concession—gave him a fair warning and all that, which was quite within his rights. And Strong, or one of his ruffians, booted Tsuyama off the place. Positively booted him! Of course you know what results will be."

"The Bitsuis have a great deal of influence with the governor general," Bostell murmured. "It was a mistake to adopt such high-handed tactics."

"Mark my words, Bostell." The Englishman leaned forward across Haddon's knees and emphasized his speech with a bony forefinger, his sallow face hardened to an ugly mask. "Before very long this fellow Strong will be running to you with a cry for protection, and you will be unable to give him protection; you won't have a peg to stand on. The Japs can prove in their court, if it comes to that, that the Chon-san grant was obtained by fraud from the old emperor; that he signed away the most valuable mining concession in Korea under threats and practical blackmail. What will the court do? Child's question! Revoke the concession, of course, and give the Bitsui Company its proper right to the Chon-san fields."

Bostell stared hard at the glowing tip of his cigarette for a minute. Haddon, outside the topic of discussion, but with every acquisitive faculty alert at the promise of interesting information, waited silently for the argument to be resumed. Bostell spoke:

"I—I hardly think, my dear Bronson-Tighe, that the governor general would tolerate absolute confiscation of American property at this time. What with one or more delicate issues between the two nations still in the diplomatic cloud, such an act would have a bad effect at Washington."

"What rot!" the Englishman countered testily. "Do you suppose Washington will take up the cudgels for a pack of freebooters away up in the mountains of Korea? Never fear! Besides, by the time Washington hears of it the trick will be turned; your John Strong and his hard-fisted crew will be turned out. Once out, they'll never get back."

"Is all this information the Japanese have given you for publication?"

Haddon put the question simply and with no apparent guile. The Englishman flushed slightly and shifted his glance to the American's face; blank innocence there.

"Well—er—hardly. You might say it's unofficial as yet. One keeps his ears open in Seoul, you know, and hears a great deal that isn't ripe for cabling. But in time there'll be quite a lively little bit of news there. When it bobs up you must get the right of it. No Don Quixote riding at windmills, you understand. Your consul general here will tell you a fellow feeling for your countryman would be foolish in this instance. Strong was born to be hanged. And a proper hanging he'll get some day if he doesn't mind his step."

The subject of Chon-san and the misdemeanors of John Strong was dropped and conversation drifted into other channels. The hour grew late; the lounge room became deserted. With a hearty invitation that he call at the consulate the following morning, Bos-

tell took leave of Haddon and went out to his ricksha. Bronson-Tighe, after a casually voiced offer to put Haddon up for the night at his house, permitted him to take his coolie-power carriage for the Astor House, Seoul's only foreign-style hotel. The Englishman promised to call for his protégé at the hotel on the following day.

Alone in the curtained ricksha and with the bobbing white ghost of the puller between the shafts the only human thing visible in the ponderable dark of the streets, Peter Haddon, the newcomer, felt once more the weight of an impalpable incubus closing down on his shoulders; a something, blind of eye and deaf to reason, yet steel-strong in unswerving will to grind to flinders all resisting wills, seemed to be cloaked by the dark as by a magic garment. The bleak white fronts of the mud houses on either side of the street, scales on the flanks of night; the towering mass of South Gate with its uptilted gables and black loopholes for archers; the vertebra of the city wall stretching, humped and crooked, over miles of mean roofs—all these elements of the unreal gave fitting atmosphere to the home of this unseen, baleful genius of the land. Haddon felt himself alone with the animal between the shafts in a dead world.

A sleepy porter admitted him to the hotel, and he went to his room. As he started to unpack some of his effects, he remembered a letter his manager, the supreme captain of all the army of Consolidated News, had given him on the day of his departure from New York. "To be read when you're on the field," the manager had said in handing him the letter with his farewell clasp of the hand. Haddon found the letter, and, with a poignant sense of awe, broke the envelope seal. To read it was to hear the voice of the "Big Boss" carrying over continent and ocean to this grotesque outland city. The precise lines of typed message said this:

You are going to a hard field—one of the hardest assignments within my power to give. You are replacing a man who failed, and you will fail, too, if you are guided by his methods. Bronson-Tighe has sold himself body and soul to the Japanese; therefore he has ceased to be a valuable member of the Consolidated's staff. Our service is beyond buying by any man or any government. If we cannot have honest news, honestly, we want none.

I know that you will encounter strange conditions and many discouragements—perhaps active hostility from certain quarters. Be honest. Keep your skirts clean. Fight nobody's fight, and pull nobody's chestnuts out of the fire. Remember you are sent to get the news for the Consolidated; do that fully, conscientiously, and you will achieve high. Yours, S——,

General Manager.

CHAPTER IX.

At the end of his first week in Korea, Peter Haddon knew less about the country, its witless, lackluster people, its destinies being molded behind the screen of Japanese bureaucracy, than on the night of his arrival. One sure fact impressed itself upon the newcomer's perception from a hundred different angles: Seoul and all Korea was built round by a wall, not to be breached or scaled by an insurgent foreigner. And that wall was of tight Japanese architecture, smooth and even decorative as to surface, but unassailable because of that very polish. Behind that wall Japan had things to do which the world beyond must not know. Some might call it the plundering of a nation; others, benevolent assimilation.

Perhaps if Peter Haddon had not been so new in the country and to the admirable indirection of Japanese initiative he would have been better prepared for the surprise that came at the end of his first week's residence. As it was, he got it fair in the face. It was at the club. Bronson-Tighe, who had been dining with Haddon, lit an

after-coffee cigarette, sprawled back in his chair, and allowed his indolent glance to rest for a minute on the nervous, sharp-cut features across the cloth.

"I say, Haddon, I take it you've achieved your bachelor's degree in things Korean by this time, and your tutor can be dismissed." The Englishman's statement drawled into the upward inflection of a question.

"Can't say I'm wise enough to get a sheepskin," Haddon laughed. "But I probably know as much as I would fifty years from now—or more. You've been very kind——"

"No, thanks, dear fellow. Duty, you know. And, besides, I like the cut of your jib—your spirit of hustle and get-there—all very novel and refreshing in this wretched country. We'll get along top high."

"We have hit it off very nicely," Haddon agreed. "And now that I can go it alone you'll be buying a ticket for Charing Cross chop-chop, as they say over here."

A faint glimmer of amusement lighted the Englishman's tired eyes, and he toyed with his coffee spoon as if balancing words.

"I said we *will* get on top high together," he resumed, shading the verb ever so slightly. "Because, you see, dear fellow, the tutor cannot lose interest in his scholar like you'd shed a cricket jacket. He may, however, become sort of a guardian angel—if they have angels in this beastly land, which God forbid!"

"I don't make you, Bronson-Tighe," Haddon put in bluntly. "Come out from behind the oleanders." The older man's brows lifted in polite protest at the vernacular.

"Hah! Oleanders; quite right! What I mean to say is that now that we know each other and—and fit, you might say, our future relations will go like a Mayfair tea. I'm to stay in Seoul a bit longer, you see."

The thin, shrewd face of the Consolidated's ambassador to Korea reflected hot intolerance of any beating about the bush. Haddon's chin shifted forward in his cupped palms as he shot the question:

"You said you'd be a guardian angel. You talk of future relations. What's the game, Bronson-Tighe? Out with it!"

"Just this, dear boy: I have been appointed press adviser to Prince Ito, governor general of Korea—a government position, you know. I am to give out all the official news of the Japanese governing office here. Nothing to be published that does not come through me." He finished with a smug smile of pride.

Haddon received his declaration level-eyed. Perhaps a slight tightening of the lines above his brow betrayed his surprise. For a minute neither spoke. The American broke silence:

"This is a new job in the government bureau—this press-agent job?"

"You might say as much," Bronson-Tighe answered, tapping back a yawn with delicate fingers. "Jappy fellow who used to try this thing bungled it horribly. Old Ito wanted a chap who knew the game—knew the country and all that sort. No sinecure!"

"So you are to give out—are to give to me—the news stamped 'Safe' with Ito's seal, eh?" Dangerous hardness was creeping into Haddon's voice.

"I say, you're putting it rather bluntly, you know," Bronson-Tighe protested.

"Your own words, Bronson-Tighe. And what if I'm not satisfied with the 'safe' news I get from the government through its press agent? What if I find news outside and put it on the cable?" The challenge in Haddon's voice was backed by every line in his face. He was leaning a little forward now, studying the saturnine features of his predecessor as a boxer watches for the eye

flicker registering the outshooting of a fist. The Englishman snapped the ash from his cigarette and permitted his mouth to frame a patronizing smile.

"Don't try it, Haddon. I say, don't try it! Remember this is not your Broadway, where a pressman can bully and bluff his way through anything. They have little ways here of—er—regulating the news and correspondents alike. You'll find me broad gauge—oh, very broad! We'll get on."

"Let's understand each other right here," Haddon blurted out. "I come to Seoul representing the Consolidated Press, to get the news as I find it. The governor general thereupon creates the office of press adviser and installs in it a man still drawing salary from the Consolidated in order that only the right kind of news shall get out. I must go to that man for my rubber-stamped news or suffer the consequences. Is that the gist of the situation?"

"You have rather a nasty way of putting it, Haddon," Bronson-Tighe answered, his eyes narrowing and his under lip a little outthrust. "But have your own phrase; the substance stands."

Haddon pushed back his chair and got to his feet.

"Well, then, Bronson-Tighe," he said, "let's not misunderstand each other. We won't get on at all. Good evening."

Next day Haddon paid a visit to Bostell, the consul general, in his shabby house back of the New Palace grounds —signal advertisement, this rambling, one-storied affair of faded brick, of a state department's niggardliness.

Haddon left his ricksha at the gate of the compound and walked directly into the office room. Seeing Bostell in close conversation with a stranger, whose broad, khaki-clad back was to the door, Haddon murmured an apology and was withdrawing when Bostell stopped him with a beckoning hand.

"Come right in, Mr. Haddon!" he called. "I think Mr. Strong would not object—would be pleased, in fact, to have you hear what he has to say. I was just telling him that you had been sent to Seoul by the Consolidated and —Mr. Strong, shake hands with Mr. Haddon, the new member of our little colony here."

The stranger rose as Haddon came forward, turned, and held out his hand. The correspondent found himself looking into a lean, competent face, which bore in its deeply chiseled lines a subtle stamp of power. It was the face of a pioneer, of one battering at the gates of the Beyond. Haddon had seen such in Nicaragua, in the lake camps of Ontario.

"If you are John Strong of the Chon-san mines, I have heard of you," Haddon said, with a frank smile. "You live with the tigers, I believe."

"So do you—right here in Seoul," Strong answered. "This is the tigers' home town, and the big he-tiger's name is Ito." This without a smile and in deep seriousness.

"I was telling Mr. Strong, when you came in," Bostell put in, "that it might be well for you to know the situation he faces—a very delicate situation, and one of many difficulties. There's no telling when you might be able to help him by shedding a little publicity on the affair back home."

"You're the right sort, Mr. Haddon, or you wouldn't be out here representing a big news association. I don't mind giving you the straight of the hard game we're up against—we Chon-san people." Strong had settled himself in his chair again, his long, putteed legs stretched out before him.

"Here's the way things stack up, Mr. Haddon: Five years before the Russian war an American prospector got a grant to work gold properties up on the Chon-san River. The Emperor of Korea not only gave him title to the ground covered by the prospects, but one that carried riparian rights within

the territory included in the grant. Without the river the mines would be worthless. A company was capitalized, and the mines worked with profit. Fact is, they're the only mineral property in Korea worth looking at.

"Then the war broke, and afterward Japan came in and began to run the Korean government, first as a charitable friend, then as master and owner. You know how they finally booted the old emperor off the throne and locked him up in his palace right back of Bostell's compound here, and took over Korea as a province of Japan. Not a peep from any of the powers! That done, they looked around to see what they could grab in this God-forsaken peninsula. First thing that hits their eye is the Chon-san concession. 'We'll just take that,' they say. 'But we'll have to go easy so as not to raise a yell at Washington.'

"So in comes the Bitsui Kaisha, which makes everything from hairpins to battleships over in Japan—the biggest bunch of capital in the empire. The Bitsui Company wants the government to declare the old emperor's grant to us void on the grounds he was insane when he deeded it. But Ito thinks there's a prettier way than that—one not quite so coarse. 'Let's concede that the emperor gave away his gold land,' says Ito to the Bitsui people, 'but not the river. We'll give your Bitsui crowd the river'—above Chon-san, mind you, where there isn't a color of gold. 'Go ahead and divert the river with some fake irrigation scheme, and the Americans will have to close down their mines. Then we'll revoke their patent because they cannot live up to the terms of continuous operations.'"

Strong spread out his hands as if a blue print had been laid by them on Bostell's desk. Haddon, leaning forward eagerly, kept his eyes on the mining man's face, intently watching the play of hate there. The "feel" of a big story was coming to him. Here was his first peep behind the curtain. Strong went on:

"Well, sir, the Bitsuis sent a little snake—name's Tsuyama, and I met him to-day in Hagiwara's office—sent this little snake to scare us out with a threat of diverting the river. We didn't scare a little bit. So they made the next move. Just last week we discovered Jap engineers running lines for a reservoir just beyond the boundary of the Chon-san grant and three miles upriver from the mines. Fact is, the dam will stand right on our line at one place. The hills come down in a favoring contour right there; a three-thousand-dollar dam will have the Chon-san camp dry as a bone inside of two months. Then we'll be left flat!"

"Why don't you send a protest to Washington?" Haddon put in eagerly. "The state department can stop this aggression."

Strong smiled a little wearily.

"Since the Japs asked the United States to withdraw its minister in Seoul Washington has proceeded to forget there's any Americans in Korea. I've written to our New York office to get its lawyers busy with the department; but even if the Japs let the letter go by, which I misdoubt, you know how long it takes to start the wheels down in Washington. The trick will be turned before ever the fourth assistant to the assistant secretary hears about our trouble."

"And I, of course, have no power to intervene," the consul general hurried to supplement. "I am only a commercial agent; not a diplomatic one."

"Sue out a writ of injunction in the courts here, then," Haddon volunteered. "They wouldn't dare deny you that."

"Just what they'd like to have me do!" Strong's fist banged on the desk. "Get me into court and I'm done for. First place, I'd have to hire a Jap lawyer—a white man is not allowed to

practice law unless he becomes a Japanese citizen, and no white man will do that. Suppose I trusted my case to a 'brownie'; how far would I get? They'd hang it up until the dam was finished. Remember that whisky decision over in Osaka, Bostell; when the highest court in Japan ruled that whisky made by a Jap in Japan, and with a label copied after the genuine even down to the 'By Special Appointment' line across the three feathers, was Scotch? That's where the white man gets off in a Japanese court."

Silence fell between the three men. To Haddon this meeting with the American engineer and the story he told carried the thrill of the dramatic. Here was one of the Saxon breed matching his strength in the unequal struggle with the inscrutable genius of Asia. Superb courage! The hot chivalry of youth, which was Haddon's, leaped out in sympathy for the broader issues behind the contest—for the ideals of race, of achievement after the Saxon fashion. Here in this instance of John Strong's battling for existence the newcomer discovered the epitome of all the ages since first the Aryan went forth from the cradle of the peoples to hack his way to destiny.

Peter Haddon, the man trained to perceive the right and defend it against whatever odds, cast his lot with John Strong that minute of silence in Bostell's office.

"You say the government crowd isn't inclined to dispute your title to the land at Chon-san, but denies your right to use the river?" Haddon plumped the question eagerly.

"In so many words, that's the way Hagiwara, counselor to the governor general, let me have it just this morning when I went to see him," Strong replied.

"But how can they admit the legality of one feature of your grant and not the rest?" the newspaper man asked. "It's all down in black and white in your patent, isn't it?"

"Yes, and with the old emperor's vermilion seal at the bottom of it. I've seen the original. But Hagiwara, speaking for Ito, of course, and the Bitsui Kaisha, denies there's any right to the river mentioned in our deed. He asks me to prove it by submitting the document."

"Well, why not submit it?" Haddon queried.

"It's in the company's safe-deposit box in New York," Strong answered, a little hopelessly. "I offered to cable for a certified copy. Hagiwara said no document that did not bear the vermilion seal would be considered proof of anything. You see the game: if my company were foolish enough to trust that deed to the mails it would never get here; it would be 'lost' somewhere this side of Yokohama. Then——" Strong lifted his shoulders in eloquent finality of deduction. But Haddon's galloping mind could not be tripped on barriers.

"But the duplicate of your deed—some official record kept by the Korean government," he urged. "Surely they have some sort of recording system. Wouldn't that be as strong proof as the deed back in New York? Show them that."

"There again they've got me," the master of Chon-san admitted. "Hagiwara says all the records of the emperor's land grants and concessions to foreigners have disappeared—dropped out of sight the time they forced the old boy's abdication. I don't know whether he's lying or not, but——"

"I think that much is truth." It was Bostell who ventured the interruption, timidly and with fingers at lips, as if to feel the words as they were spoken. "It is not—ah—generally known outside the governor general's office that the old emperor smuggled out of Seoul a great many records and state papers

dealing with his relations with foreigners—particularly the Russians—a short time before the Japanese put him off the throne. Very probably the record of the Chon-san grant was among these documents."

Strong took this intelligence with tightened lips, but Haddon pursued his logic unabashed:

"There you are! With the record missing, how can the Japanese say your deed didn't cover rights to the river?" Strong's lips parted in a weary smile.

"They can say what they please, Haddon. It's up to me to prove they're liars; and our deed, back in New York, or the record, God knows where, are the only two things that can talk."

Even the enthusiasm of the newcomer could not prevail against cumulative fact. Haddon sat scowling at a lithograph of Washington over the mantel.

Strong, nursing a stringy cigar, relapsed to moody silence. But a curious excitement seemed to grow upon the little consul general. He fidgeted restlessly in his chair, pushed back his thinning hair with a quick movement of both hands, as if he were stroking a cat, and finally arose. Quick little steps carried him to the door, which he opened wide enough for a hasty survey of the hallway beyond, then closed again and locked. He tiptoed back to his chair and seated himself, with a nervous cough.

"Mr. Strong—a-hem! I have made it a point since my incumbency of this office never to compromise myself by engaging in affairs beyond the domain of the consulate." Bostell was hurrying his speech like a man just come from a cold shower; his mild blue eyes were become shifting and furtive. "But this is an extraordinary occasion, and seems to demand that I break the rule. Not for your sake alone, my dear Strong, but for the sake of all of us Americans here in Korea—our prestige, let us say. I—ah—think I can help you to recover the missing record of your deed to Chon-san."

Strong suddenly straightened his back and threw himself forward in his chair in an attitude of alert attention. Haddon was no less broad awake. Bostell proceeded, in his dot-and-carry-one manner:

"During the trying days of July, 1907—when the Palace Guard revolted against the Japanese, you remember, Strong—I had the chance to do a good turn for a certain influential Korean of the court. In fact, I concealed him in the consulate here while the Japanese were trying to run him down. The Korean dignitary was at that moment engaged in the dangerous task of smuggling these very state papers—among them doubtless the record of the Chon-san grant—out of the royal library and to a safe hiding place selected by his late majesty. I have every reason to believe that after he left the consulate he carried the papers to the secret hiding place chosen by the emperor, and there left them. That Korean personage is, I think, the only man in Seoul to-day who knows where these documents are secreted. If he could be induced to tell—if any gratitude he may feel toward me would prevail——"

"Who is he? Where is he?" Strong shot the questions like bullets from a mitrailleuse. Bostell winced and lifted hushing hands.

"My dear sir, you're going too fast. This is a matter of—um—great delicacy. And I am departing dangerously from my rule to have any part in it. But if you will consent to leave to me the preliminaries of approaching this certain person, I think I may arrange a meeting with him. I cannot promise, of course, what his attitude will be; but I——"

"I'll leave it entirely up to you, Bostell," said Strong, rising to grip the other's thin hands. Haddon, in the flux

of excitement at the promise of a real mystery drama of the Orient, arose, too. His eyes were dancing as he shook Bostell's hand.

"You'll let me know, Mr. Strong, how this affair turns out?" he pleaded. "When it's ripe there's a story in this that'll put Scheherazade in the Mother Goose class."

"Let you know?" the man in khaki echoed in round tones. "Why, man, I'm counting you in on it—just as far in as you want to go!"

CHAPTER X.

Ten days later, word came from the little consul general to Strong and Haddon; they were to meet him, in rickshas, before the gate of the Methodist missions compound, the hour eleven o'clock that night. "Be cautious," was the urgent injunction in the note fixing rendezvous; "if you are followed pass right by and swing around to the club, where I will join you later." Henry T. Bostell had lived long enough in Korea to know the truth of that native adage which has it that "the rat tells the cat and the cat tells the pigeon what nobody but the king knows."

Strong, who had fretted through a fortnight of inaction, knowing not what might be the covert moves of the enemy up in the Chon-san hills, down here in the governor general's office, welcomed action with the sincerity of a devotee. No less whole-souled was Peter Haddon's rise to the lure of adventure. His restless spirit was geared to the plunge into the unknown; every fiber of his acquisitive mind strained for a peep behind the screen of things unseen here in this dour country of the hidden hand.

It was raining—a dismal shroud of dampness—when Strong and Haddon set out from the Astor House to keep the appointment at the missions compound. The pale white stars of the paper lanterns hung from the rickshas' shafts made the darkness all the more ponderable. Seoul at night is a sad, unlighted desert of gawky shapes; on a night like this one it is a forsaken Gehenna. The *slosh-slosh* of the pullers' bare feet in the mud and driving of rain against the stretched curtains of the rickshas were the only sounds in the wilderness of the sleeping city; these and the occasional owlish cry of the watchman's whistle. Dread of the unseeable and unknowable genius of a dead land struck in with the cold of the rain.

Haddon from time to time looked back through the isinglass slit in the rear curtain. He saw no following light, no pursuing shadow. Finally, after a half hour of twisting and turning, the ricksha's pace slackened, and, over the top of the tarpaulin bib in front of him, he saw a third pale star detach itself from the blank shadow of a high wall and move out to join the two. Bostell's cautious hail came through the dark: "Follow me."

More blind groping through the hallways of the night, through the drenched gullies between blank walls. One of the pullers gave a short whistle, and somewhere near at hand a gate creaked. The three vehicles passed through it and into a narrow inclosure, lighted only by the smoky red blur of a torch. The startled grunts of frightened pigs, noise of a heavy door pushed back, and a square of light was cut out of the dark. It framed a tall, white-swathed figure. The three visitors scrambled out from their curtained conveyances, and were piloted by the servant in white through to the inner guest room of the house—a place lit only by a bundle of rushes set in an oil-dish and smelling abominably of oil smoke, native tobacco, and the composite odors of a Korean ménage. Bostell introduced Strong and Haddon to the master of the house, Kim Yung-hai.

A German wizard with heavy blacks

and whites—one of those *Jugend* satirists of the pencil—would have delighted in the opportunity offered by the play of the rushlight on the Korean gentleman's features. It cut out a long, brown oval under the fezlike cone of horsehair indoor hat, a wisp of goat beard at heel of chin, two darker shadows wherein white irises showed—nothing more. With a wave of a thin hand, the host motioned his visitors to the mats set around the midget smoking table before which he sat, tailor-fashion. A servant passed wine cups and cigarettes. All this ceremony of greeting without a word spoken. When the wine was sipped and cigarettes lit, Bostell explained the object of the visit. The consul general used English, which Kim Yung-hai spoke with fluency.

"You may understand, my dear Yung-hai," Bostell finished, "how vitally important to Mr. Strong is the information you possess when you see me departing from my strict position as consular representative of my country in the hope of assisting him. He hangs all of his hopes on you."

The Korean's thin lips parted to emit a cloud of smoke, and he turned his shadowed eyes on Strong.

"I would like—it would please me very much to assist, sir. But you know death would be waiting—quietly—oh, so quietly. The Japanese——"

"I'll risk the death business," Strong put in impulsively. "I've played against it too many times over here to balk."

"Death for me, I meant, of course," Kim Yung-hai amended, with unchanged inflection. "Done quietly—yes, quietly; but—unpleasant, sir." The whites of the man's unchanging eyes showed ghostly in the half light; his patrician face was without a line of animation.

"Not at all!" Strong caught him up the least bit impatiently. "I'll run whatever risks—I and my men. You won't appear in the business after you've told us how to get that record of the Chon-san grant."

"Before I could tell you, even if I dared, I would have to get his majesty's permission. And how can I do that? They have him locked up in the New Palace, and not even his son may see him alone."

"I think—in fact, I am quite sure I will be able to get a message to the emperor and an answer back." It was Bostell in his curious speech of timid self-repression. Haddon shot a glance of surprise at him. This little mouse of a man was capable of the most astonishing reversals of form. Bostell get a message to the imperial prisoner? But hadn't it been Bostell who had put them on the track of the hidden records, brought them thus far in their adventure? "Great little guy" was the silent approbation the correspondent gave him.

But now he had occasion to give tribute of his youthful enthusiasm to another—to John Strong, the fighter from Chon-san. For he saw the man in a surprising rôle. Not the rough-heeled master of men, the driver, the bull-headed slugger Haddon had set down the engineer, but the smooth and silken diplomat slipping potent words from leash. For Strong was now approaching Kim Yung-hai from another and a vulnerable angle. He was orating. Knowing full well the power of piled-up words to stir the Korean heart, Strong was giving the former palace seneschal a moving recitation of the wrongs of his country and the black crimes of the invaders. His eloquence was like a fire. The ascetic face of the patrician showed successive fluxes of hate, of pity and heartbreak. His thin hands would not be still; they fluttered over his robe and to his dull lips. Out of cavernous sockets his eyes burned.

"It is our solemn duty to strike

them," Strong was intoning, with full voice; "to strike them wherever and whenever we can. They move in the dark. We must move in the dark. Their hand is heavy when it strikes; ours must be swift and merciless. To block their greed—to snatch the prize before they can grasp it——"

"Yes—yes!" the Korean whispered. "Our hand is almost ready to strike. Our hand now holds the knife, and their great Ito will feel it. Soon——"

He stopped, jaw fallen and sudden terror rolling up his eyes. He was for the instant as a man suddenly dragged back from hypnosis. What his tongue had dropped under the spur of Strong's philippic had popped unbidden from some sealed chamber of his mind, and terror at his revelation caught the man in an ague of trembling. The three Americans were themselves meshed in the Korean's web of fear. Come here to plot a coup against the masters of the land, in the wink of an eye they found themselves made privy to—what? To a conspiracy of assassination? To one of those dark and devious blood trails woven like tiger tracks across the pages of Korean history? It was as if Strong's flamboyant oratory had been a drill sunk through the rock of Oriental impassivity to strike a gushing, poisonous well.

"Excuse! Excuse!" Kim Yung-hai was babbling. "My mind is sick. I did not know what I said. Yes, I will help you get what you want. With his majesty's permission, I will lead you to the secret place of the court papers."

Strong was quick to catch him up:

"If our ears are deaf and our tongues are sealed, you will do this, Kim Yung-hai?"

"Yes—yes! Bring just a word from the emperor, and I will lead you to the Turtle Stone and the place beneath." His assent came breathlessly. "But without the word I cannot—I dare not."

"You shall have it—if I can arrange," Bostell put in a little tremulously. Sense of his anomalous position in the light of the revelation let slip by the Korean lay on him like a weight; but he was not one to turn back on his word.

"The Turtle Stone?" Strong queried. "What is that? Where is it?"

"At the tomb of the kings—of his majesty's ancestors on Tabong Mountain," the Korean answered hastily, still shaken as he was by the gravity of his inadvertence. "There, under the Turtle Stone, lies the hidden way to the chamber of the dead, and it was there by his majesty's orders I hid the papers from the royal library. But"—cold terror was flooding back upon him; perhaps at recollection of his flight to the mysterious cache on Tabong Mountain as well as because of his lately voiced threat against the iron master of the land—"but I cannot go there without his majesty's permission. It is sacred ground."

The three visitors rose to go. As he shook the hand of each in the dooryard, Kim Yung-hai looked his appeal for protection of his dangerous secret from eyes that were doglike. The man plainly was clay in the hands of the three whites. They climbed into their rickshas, buttoned the curtains before them, and the word was given to swing back the door giving from the courtyard onto the street. Strong's spidery vehicle, leading the others, spun out through the dark.

A high-pitched yell in coolie lingo, then a crash as Strong's ricksha collided and locked wheels with another, which was trundling down the street without a shaft light. Bostell and Haddon's carriages ranged alongside to investigate. Strong, plucking the white paper lantern from the shaft of his ricksha, leaned out and held the light

to the shadowed recess of the other—the one with which he had collided.

A round, full face, red as a pumpkin in candlelight, met his gaze. Moon eyes looked into his imperturbably.

"Ah-ha, Mista Strong of Chon-san," purred Ichi Tsuyama, the Bitsui Kaisha's little snake. "Mista Strong makes a visiting at late night and at a ver-ree interesting Korean gentleman's house. Yiss."

CHAPTER XI.

Of all humankind under the cold Korean sun there was none John Strong would have preferred less to meet under the circumstances of the midnight encounter than Ichi Tsuyama. Was it accident—that blundering into a phantom ricksha traveling without a light; or had this sleek, suave Oriental, following his instinct for searching out trails in the Korean jungle, deliberately thrown himself across the path of the three plotters? In either instance, Tsuyama's quick recognition of Strong—fortunately he could not see Bostell and Haddon in the dark—and his no less ready reference to the identity of the Korean gentleman whose gate had just been opened left no doubt but that the quick intelligence of the Bitsui's spy caught significance in the circumstance. The full-throated curse Strong had rapped out as he sprang from his toy carriage and disengaged the locked wheels with a heave of his shoulder must have been meat for the Japanese—so the white man later pondered in self-disgust; no more sure admission of embarrassment could Tsuyama have required.

On the morning of the third day after the visit to Kim Yung-hai two messages came to Strong at the hotel. One was a note, delivered by the consul general's runner, requesting Strong's presence at the consulate. The second was from Chon-san, brought down by a trustworthy coolie of the office staff in lieu of the less sure service of the telegraph. Strong broke the seal and read:

> Looks like construction work on the Bitsui dam is about ready to be commenced. Cement and steel have been coming in from the railroad for a week past, and the Japs have a coolie gang at work leveling off the dam site. They've stolen twenty of our muckers and car pushers by offer of higher wages; others fixing to stampede. Hadn't you better return as soon as possible?
>
> KNOWLES.

Strong crushed the letter in his fist, his face contorted by hot rage. So, in his absence, the enemy had begun to move forward his lines and lay his siege to Chon-san, whose gage was precious water! And back there in the ragged mountains was the family—the Chon-san family—with the invader at its gates. The head of that family, strong to serve and willing, felt himself all of a sudden helpless against the unswerving glacial creep of that power unseen which was now toppling its weight over the very boundary of the family's domain. And here was he, bent on the last desperate resource, involved in the toils of blind intrigue which might lead to success, or, that failing, surely to disaster.

Strong swore. It was the manhood in him—the Saxon manhood demanding fair battling and no favor that growled protest at this strangling in the dark.

He climbed into his ricksha and set off for the consulate. Bostell met him with a quiet light of triumph on his features.

"It's all right," he whispered as he led his visitor into the office and shut the door. "I have it here—the emperor's permission to bring back from Tabong Mountain the record of the Chon-san grant." He brought from his wallet a thin, folded slip of rice paper, scrawled over with ideographs and with a tiny red seal—the emperor's personal stamp—in one corner. Strong scanned the precious talisman apathetically.

"Kim Yung-hai is willing to start

with you for the royal tombs and the Turtle Stone whenever you give the word," Bostell rattled on. "Two days' sailing by sampan up the coast from Chemulpo to Haiju, and then a day in a coolie chair over to the mountain. You can make the trip in less than a week. Once you get away from Chemulpo unnoticed, you are safe; no Japs along the coast."

"Don't see how I can make it, after all," Strong declared moodily. "Look at this!" He spread out his assistant's note for the consul general to read.

"But haven't you got somebody at the mines you could trust to make the trip?" Bostell urged. "Somebody the government crowd don't know as they know you would be better suited, even, than you. Surely, Strong, I don't want to see you abandon what may be your only chance."

The big man in khaki bent his head in study. He murmured aloud a review of the names of men under him, finding in each instance that the exigencies of work in the mines disqualified this and that possible ambassador to Tabong Mountain. Finally——

"I've got to take the chance!" he exploded. "I'll send down a man—a new man I don't know very well by the name of West. Appears to be competent and level-headed, only I can't tell what he'd do in a tight place. Only fellow I can spare right now, however. You'll tell this Kim geezer West is to get the Chon-san record allee-same myself. I'll give my man a stake—plenty to cover expenses and make a fat present to Kim when the paper we want is in his hands. If Yung-hai balks at the last minute"—Strong gave the other a significant look—"you know! Tell him maybe our tongues will wag over a little killing threat we heard in his house."

Bostell held up a hasty hand to check Strong's incautious remark. The latter laughed shortly.

"*Maskee* that long face, Bostell. Forget what that Korean pipe dreamer said and tell me how you got to the Old Boy, His Majesty Bugs." A sly look of humor turned up the corners of the little chap's eyes, and he patted the big shoulder lifting above his.

"Secret of my office, Strong—state secret!" he chuckled. "Going? Well, God with you—and with us all!"

When Strong stepped off the train at Phyong-yang, the railroad point for Chon-san, he found himself in the midst of unwonted activity. On a siding stood a string of flat cars laden with cement barrels and tarpaulin-covered masses whose exposed ends showed the tips of steel reënforcement rods. Bull carts, with their high, solid wheels, were backed against the cars, and onto them a frowzy crew of coolies were stowing the cars' freight. They bent their backs under the spur of crackling objurgations coming from a midget Japanese foreman; like a frisky fox terrier, the diminutive taskmaster skipped from flat car to bull cart, shoving and cuffing the placid giants to their utmost endeavor. The Japanese paused in his efforts when he caught sight of the figure of the white man, lifted his bowler hat with exaggerated courtesy, and bowed.

The big man in khaki ignored the greeting, and strode through the crowd of loafers by the railroad track on up the slovenly street to the native inn where his horse had been cared for against his return from Seoul. He soon had his saddlebag, containing tins of food for the journey over the mountains, hung in place, and, mounting, turned his horse's head toward the distant line of blue in the west, where lay beleaguered Chon-san.

Once away from the town and in the interminable mazes of the paddy fields, Strong pushed his mount to a long, swift trot. Speed—speed he must

have! To get back to that haven in the wilderness which was home to him; to hear the roar of stamps and screech of hoists—all the sweet disharmony of labor being wrought under his hand. Ah, that would be heartening! Somehow the master of Chon-san knew that he need only have once more his little army of toilers at his back to feel anew the full flush of confidence. Once he looked again into the strong eyes of those youngsters of his race, his captains of toil, felt the grip of their hands —competent, dare-all hands, and Strong knew in his heart he could fight the fight against the creeping yellow flood.

Yes, and above all the others there was one to inspire supreme courage. Out of the mists rising like pale smoke from the steaming rice fields the rider wove a beloved image—eyes that caught and held the elfin light of morning in a cool cañon; broad brow under its shading masses of burnt copper; mouth not for pouting and the cheap wiles of woman, but firm and competent and unemotional. Elsa McClellan, a man's woman, the woman a man could love as he loved his work—deep down in the core of his being. Now that the big fight was on; now that the fist was closing about Chon-san, she was the one to prop a man's resolution and give him strength. Perhaps—Strong shut his eyes and dared to see a picture—perhaps the day would befall when Elsa McClellan would come to him, stand before him and give him her cool hands. And he would look down to the pale wine glow of sunlight in her hair to the living lights lying far back in her eyes, and hear her say: "John, you have fought and you have won; let me share with you the glory." She would say this, knowing full well that he, the blunderer, the man afraid to speak his heart's thoughts, would lack the courage for this supreme daring, for the final conquest.

So over the dreary miles of a dead land the vision in the mists rode with Strong. The second day he topped the high cañon wall above Chon-san, whereon perched the crumbling fortress the Mongol hordes had once stormed. It was late afternoon; the September sun, already hastening in its southing against the approach of Siberian winter, hung poised like a carnelian globe on the edge of the opposite cañon wall; all the valley of Chon-san was sinking into pale lilacs and hints of purple. Fondly as the eye of a father upon a nursery, Strong's gaze went down to the toy town below him. There were the thin stacks of the mill, spouting blue wood smoke; there the hump-shouldered shape of shaft house and mill roof, the white blot of the dumps, sprawling huddle of wasps' nests which was Pigtown. Up from the depths came the *bom-bom-bom* of the stamps —life pulse of Chon-san. A harsh clatter of rock falling over the grizzly struck a high note in the labor chorus.

Chon-san—his Chon-san!

Boom!

All the cañon chattered echoes, and the higher mountains mumbled a refrain. Strong turned his eyes to the direction of the sound. Far up the valley, where the river wound about the hills like a fillet of wire, sunlight fell on a mushroom cloud of brown, upheaved.

Boom! Boom! Boom-boom!

Jets of dirt thrown up between the knuckles of the hills—a far-flung cloud of brown over fresh scars in the softness and greenery of the valley. Strong saw the rending of the dynamite, and fury was upon him.

"Ye-ah!" he growled his challenge deep in his throat. "Go to it! Shoot! But we'll get the last shot!"

Then down he rode into the misty blue, a captain come to place himself in the forefront of the battle.

CHAPTER XII.

Among the clear-eyed, strong-thewed young battlers of his own race and blood—men whose souls were purged by work—Tom West, the man from the Chemulpo gutter, felt himself outcast. Mentally he was forever ringing the leper bell and crying "Unclean!" Though he tried to mingle with his fellows of the camp and join in their healthy camaraderie, it was only the outward body of him that did this; the bruised inner consciousness looked on in fear—fear for the others of Chonsan to whom it would cry "Beware!"

For days the lean wolf of remorse that followed him would hide itself. Engrossed in his new duties in the assay room or out under the hot sunshine with transit and chain, West would so cram his mental vision with urgent affairs as to exclude that slinking, furtive shadow. But always it would come back to dog him. Down in the gray vault of the three hundred level, where he occasionally relieved Roberts on night shift, or under the hard light of the incandescents over the concentrating tables, with the stamps thundering at his elbow; whenever he was alone and his mind for the moment unoccupied, the pursuer came to sit down beside him.

"Remember what you were," the Nemesis voice would whisper. "Don't forget what you are," it answered itself.

And there was another wraith to plague him. Drink called. At first faintly and with the innocent plaint of a child: "You are mine; come now, aren't we good friends?" Then, as denial wasted him like a fever, the call was stronger, more imperious: "Here, quit this foolish pretense! You are a drunkard. You deceive no one, least of all yourself. Come—forget!"

There was drink to be had in camp. The huskies who came up from the dripping stopes, in from the sun-scorched hills where the big road was being laid down, would toss off a glass of whisky—one glass—and call it a "bracer." Never more than one, however. West permitted himself not that one. Though at times his whole body was seized with a chill at the sight of red liquor tipped to lips, and even the sickly sweet odor of the native rice wine in the close walls of tunnel or heading fired his desire, he kept to his resolution.

The double strain of the conscience cry which would not be stilled, and the drink call which waxed stronger on denial, was almost greater than tortured nerves could endure. In his lonesomeness and single-handed battle against temptation the heart of Tom West cried out for a confidant. Fate threw him one out of hand.

It was the day Strong left on his mission to Seoul. West was directing the placing of the drills in the west heading of four hundred level, alone under the thin light of an overhead incandescent with five native bunglers. Two drills were in place on the bench, and the Koreans were struggling with the third when some witless ox of a man turned on the air. With a sputtering hiss, the unjacked machine reared like a bad broncho, whirled and knocked one of the coolies off the bench, dropping on his chest as he lay kicking below.

West leaped to his relief, cuffed the terrified coolies into some sense of helping, and finally raised the heavy machine from the sufferer. The man's chest was caved in. West had him on a car and down to the skip as quickly as the jabbering natives could propel the car. Once on the surface, he directed his men to carry the injured one to the hospital shack, and he himself sought out Elsa McClellan. She came and ministered to the dying coolie with quick, knowing hands, West standing

by the side of the cot, ready and eager to aid. Elsa wanted brandy, and directed West to the closet where it was stored.

"About two tablespoonsful in a glass," she dictated, not raising her eyes from the bandages her quick fingers were twining. The man uncorked the bottle and tipped its lip over the glass edge. As the brown liquor *plop-plopped* into the glass, and its subtle, grapy odor rose to West's nostrils, the drink call shouted into his ears. Despite the coming of death to the poor clay on the cot, despite the presence of the woman whom all the camp glorified, there was the call—wolfish, ravening.

His hand shook, and a gout of brandy spouted down to spatter on Elsa's hand. She looked quickly up to the white face, saw the agony in the eyes, and understood. And West knew she had seen and understood.

He set down the brandy flask, and walked unsteadily out to the pine-filled space beyond the hospital shack. When the little pines had closed about him, he threw himself down, face against the odorous brown needles and arms outflung as if to fit the arms of a cross. Then weakness—weakness and abysmal despair—took toll of Tom West's manhood. He wept.

After æons of misery something brought him back to the pine grove. It was a cool hand on his. He heard a voice:

"I understand, Tom—Tom West."

The hand closed about his with a slow, caressing pressure—a mothering caress it was. West kept his eyes buried in the needles. The voice went on, infinitely tender:

"I know it's hard—hard! I guessed —when you came to Chon-san—guessed what it was, Tom West. And I was oh, so sorry!"

"Please—go away." The shame of a man caught in weakness cried through that muffled plea.

"I cannot when you need me more than that poor coolie in there," the girl softly urged. "You need some one to tell it all to—some one who understands. I—why, I know men better than most women do, Tom West. I could understand better than most men. Tell me and let me help."

Now the soul of Tom West, battered and bleeding, and blindly groping in that dark hemisphere of despair, saw the light—caught at it. This woman, whom he had looked upon as a penitent looks up to the glorified image of the saint behind the bright sparks of candles, was come to him from a long, long way off in that wonderful world of light to be his comforter.

The man drew the hand that clasped his to rest against his fevered cheek; something tangible it was—a buoy in the black waters where he struggled. Then he told her all his tale of shame. He told it as a little child rescued from the dark and mortally afraid, still, of hidden terrors.

When he had finished, she was silent for a minute. Then, in a voice vibrant with sympathy:

"You *are* a man, Tom West—very much of a man. For you have a fight to make—a greater fight than most men have. When it gets hard—too hard to bear alone, come to me, for I understand and I can help. Count me the friend who knows the real man in you. You'll win—Tom."

CHAPTER XIII.

West girded his new self for mastering effort. From Knowles, who acted as superintendent in Strong's absence, he pleaded a place in the camp's work regimen which would take toll of his muscles and every resistant ounce of his determination. He drove his body to a point where, when work was

done, the anæsthesia of weariness would throw a cloud over his mind and exclude all morbid thoughts. Sometimes, out in the white glare of the sun where the new road was stretching its bluff length across the flank of the mountain, the drink call would come to plague him as of old. Then he would lay down his rod and chain or the ax with which he was hewing a way through the scrub, scramble down to the cool pools of the river, and, stretched at full length, let the stream lave his cheeks and soak his hair as he drank deep drafts. Or if it was down in the dynamite smudge of stope and tunnel, the man would simply add another foot pound of efficiency to his biceps and drive his tormentor into the bleak face of the rock at the point of his drill.

High excitement ruled the camp the day the vanguard of the Japanese construction gang moved over the mountain to the staked lines their pioneers had laid down across the river course just beyond the boundary of Chon-san. It was Rogers, the road builder, who first saw from the heights the cavalcade of the invaders winding down into the valley—pack mules and scores of men afoot. Where two sharp bluffs dropped down the cañon side from east and west, like huge fists holding back the mountains for the river to break through, the trailing procession came to rest, screened by the thick growth of trees along the stream side. There, where the flanking walls of the two bluffs made a shallow gorge through which the river flowed as through a gate, the Bitsui Company's engineers had driven stakes to mark the threatened dam. A hundred-yard span of concrete between the knuckles of the hills would close that gate and make Chon-san arid. The scene of the impending siege was a scant three miles from the camp of the American gold miners.

A hastily scrawled note sent by Rogers back to Knowles warned the assistant superintendent of the coming of the besiegers. The little man with the china-blue eyes, now frosty with anger, hesitated not in his first move of defense. West he summoned to him; Daniels from the assay office, and North up from three hundred level. In ten words he told them the news, then he went to a dust-covered box hidden under the accumulations of blue prints and office duffle, threw back the cover, and with a wave of his hand summoned his aids to his side.

"One for each," Knowles directed. What the young men saw in the dim interior of the box brought little gasps of exultation to their lips. There lay rifles, a dozen of them, and tidy ramparts of cartridge boxes all in order.

Not a word was spoken. Each young giant bent over the crate edge to lift out a weapon. They hefted them with wise looks, threw open their chambers, and fitted thin, steel-nosed carriers of death into the oiled jaws.

Knowles fumbled in a drawer of his desk, brought out a thin package which he crammed under his jacket, and, taking up a rifle and directing North to shoulder a transit, he led the way out of camp and up to the new road, which climbed the mountain over in the direction of the invaders' camp. The tramp was made with few words spoken. Each man was pondering the possibilities of the future. Would these rifles they carried in the crook of an arm, carelessly, yet with a hunter's alertness —would these rifles speak their short, sharp word? What would that deadly speech evoke? A handful of men with white skins marooned here in this mountain wilderness thousands of miles from home. Could they dare to match bullets with the might of the conqueror?

The little band of defenders was joined by Rogers at the road's end. He met them with the light of daring in

his eyes, fired by sight of the rifles. Down swept his pointing hand to the close-standing green of the gorge. There tiny figures scurried like white mice, clambering over bald rocks, dodging in and out among the thickets. Already brown triangles of tents spread themselves on the higher ground back from the river. The sound of axes came up to the group of white men on the mountainside; that and the *swash* of falling trees. The dam site was a buzzing hive of energy.

"Boys"—Knowles spoke in his ordinary tone of command, not a flicker of excitement in his voice—"we'll pick up our boundary stone here on the hill and resurvey our line down there past those fellows' camp, driving a stake at the end of every three chains. Big stakes nobody can help seeing. Then when we get through those Japs won't have any wrong idea about where our Chon-san boundary lies. But"—this in quick afterthought of caution—"don't any one of you make a pass with your gun. We're defending our claim; we're not trying to drive them off theirs."

They leaped to the task with the eagerness of youth adventuring. From the northwest Chon-san corner—a gray bowlder with a cross cut in its face—they sighted their line down the slope of the gorge. Through the thickets, ax-cleared for the laying of the chain, the huskies strode, sighting, measuring, stake driving. Now they were come down into the bowl of the valley where, for a distance of three hundred feet or more, the neat white stakes of the Bitsui surveyors struck a line tangent to their own. Here, in this cleared strip, three Japanese in khaki and leather puttees were manipulating transit, target, and chain. When North, the blond giant with the full back's box-square shoulders, plunged through the last fringe of thicket in advance of the chain men at his back, the Japanese turned from their work with surprise hardly concealed on their features. North carried his rifle at easy swing in his right hand, an ax in his left; light struck sinister flashes from barrel and blade. He strode out into the clearing within a few feet of one of the Japanese boundary stakes, paused, favored the three interested spectators with a long stare, then turned and beckoned to hidden fellows in the woods.

While the Japanese engineers watched, out into the clearing came West with the target and Rogers dragging the chain. The target was set at direction of the still-concealed transit man, position marked, and blunt pine stake driven home. Last to appear were little Knowles, carrying the transit, and Daniels accompanying; the latter carried two rifles in the crook of his arm—Knowles' and his own.

Side by side with the stakes driven by the Japanese surveyors were ranged the boundary markers of the white men. Each location was scrupulously exact. Knowles, peeping through the transit, was meticulous in the determination of his line, as if no tangent line of the others' surveying was there to guide him. Wholly engaged in their task and oblivious of the presence of the Japanese as though they were so many tree stumps, the men of Chon-san pursued their work. Their rifles swung at arm's length as they walked, carelessly but in the alert poise of the hunter's weapon.

In the middle of the clear strip, Knowles left his transit and beckoned North to him. There was a whispered colloquy between them. North received from the other a flat parcel, which he jammed under his jacket; then, tucking a hatchet into his belt, he stepped to a lusty young spruce lifting its tip some fifty feet or more above the lower scrub on the American side of the boundary. The Japanese drew a little nearer to watch the big fellow scale the tree with the agility of a

panther. The little band of Americans, their backs to the three brown men, watched, too.

Up North went to the slender top of the spruce—up until it began to bend under his weight. Then with the hatchet he lopped the branches free for a space of ten or fifteen feet. He crooked his thighs about the bare trunk, and clambered high. Out from beneath his jacket came the bundle Knowles had given him. North held it flat and doubled against the tree until he had driven nails along its breath. With a free-arm gesture he flung out hidden folds, which the wind caught and whipped into a streaming glory—the flag of the United States.

Insensibly the backs of the Americans straightened at the sight of the flame flag against the green of spruce and fir. Their hands gripped tighter the rifle barrels. Perhaps flamboyant and a little theatrical on Knowles' part, this flinging of the starry banner to alien winds; but not he nor his men saw it thus. To them the flag was the guarantee of what their line of fresh stakes laid down—the inviolability of Chon-san claim. It seemed to bring overseas from that distant republic which bred them promise of sanctity for their possessions—a spiritual backing, as it were, of the might to defend that lay in their rifles.

The three Japanese engineers witnessed the unfurling of the flag with wooden faces, then turned and disappeared in the direction of their camp.

Next day twenty of Chon-san's native laborers disappeared from Pigtown—household goods, children, and wives. They simply faded from camp with the coming of nightfall, and made their way to the new camp in the gorge. How the Japanese got ambassadors of higher wages through the lines to Chon-san and secured the desertions none of the white men could know. The wire of underground intelligence in the Far East has no grounding discoverable to the crude Occidental eye. Within an hour after the discovery of the defection, Knowles had three of his staff with rifles patrolling the long street of Pigtown, and through the Number One man of the coolie gang he passed blunt warning that any topknot of the off shift seen outside of a house would be target for a bullet. The assistant manager was but living up to the law John Strong laid down for the government of Chon-san—the law of the heavy hand. But that night he dispatched his messenger over the mountains to the railroad and Seoul with the note to the absent governor of this little despotism in the wilderness—the note which told Strong the battle with the enemy was joined.

Pitifully small for needful disposition was the force Arthur Knowles had to guard his frontier from aggression and keep down sedition in the ranks of his laborers. But he called shrewd strategy to his aid. An extra mine telephone he requisitioned, stretched its communicating wire the length of the new road to its end of construction on the scarp above the Japanese camp. There he kept an observer day and night; one of his dozen of white assistants with a field glass to see that no Japanese foot crossed that line of new stakes, flag-marked. From the road itself he withdrew all the workers; he dared not trust his coolies so close to the line of the besiegers lest they, too, follow sheeplike the example of the deserters. Increased vigilance in mill and underground workings was the price Knowles and his little band of valiants had to pay for keeping the stamps going.

Over the whole camp settled the tense feeling of impending crisis. The doltish Koreans moved to their tasks with sudden reluctance showing in their eyes. Each night the hollow frog note of their drum and eldritch shrieking of

the *mutang,* or witch doctor, sounded from Pigtown. They looked for signs and portents in the passing of clouds across the moon, in the cry of a heron, the path of a snake over dusty ground. The fawning servility that was their usual demeanor before their white masters grew insensibly to something like arrogance; theirs was the obedience of the Labrador wolf dog, whose crest is lowered only so long as the sledge driver has a club in his hand. Though the young men of the Chon-san family made a brave attempt to face conditions with a laugh on their lips, their effort was mummery in the discerning eyes of the two women, Jessica and Elsa. Each in her way, these two pioneer women accepted the swift unreeling of circumstance and the portent of the growing menace with fortitude and show of outward calmness. Only when her husband went up to the end of the road and prowled along the staked boundary, as he did at all hours of day and night, did the younger woman find her courage flagging. Then would she stick close by the side of Elsa, discovering in a little pat of the hand, a meaningful look, something to restore resolution.

The test came to the family one night —the seventh after the dispatching of the messenger to bring John Strong back from Seoul.

Just as the night shift was going on duty in the mill and down the shaft to the underground workings—the hour was seven—the telephone bell on the spy line to the road end brought Knowles leaping to the receiver.

"Knowles?" came the high, thin voice of "Red" Rogers at the lookout. "Say, something's doing down along the stake line—lights moving around on our side! Can't see very well, but I'm afraid they're putting something over. Better come!"

Knowles began rapping out orders. He pulled old Quartz Miller and his drillers up from four hundred level, leaving only two of his helpers below ground. Daniels and North, who were enjoying offshift, he requisitioned from their bunks; Roberts, who stood guard over Pigtown, he added to his hastily gathered scouting party. To each he gave a rifle and ammunition belt. West, who had joined the others in the cookhouse, where this impromptu mobilizing occurred, stepped forward to receive his weapon, but Knowles shook his head as he passed gun and cartridges to him.

"You're the home guard, old man," he said, with an effort to smile. "You'll have to sit on the lid—only one of us left above ground, you know. The girls——" He half turned to where his wife and Elsa still sat in their places at the table. "They're more precious than Chon-san itself, and remember: if anything starts, shoot first and ask questions afterward. That's the law round here. All ready, boys?"

They trooped off into the growing dark. In the cookhouse it was very still, for with the mobilizing of the expeditionary force the mill foreman had been drafted, and the stamps consequently had been stopped. Out in the kitchen was the occasional clatter of a pan as accompaniment to the wavering falsetto song of Chung Fow at his labor of tidying up.

For several minutes the three sat silent there with the dreary stretch of table—drab jungle of sugar bowls and high-standing vinegar castors—before them. Jessica had laid one of her hands in Elsa's, and her eyes, straying from windows to door and back to windows again, seemed ready to find some apparition of stark terror there.

West had propped his rifle out of sight behind some slickers hanging on a rough coat rack near the door, and now he was seated a little distance away from the women, his eyes daring to rest on the face of the one he adored.

More wonderful than ever, he thought, were the lines of calm strength, of complete self-assurance, about the eyes, wide apart, and the broad mouth. As he gazed, the man felt with a thrill of his new-found pride in winning back to life that here, at last, he was in a position of some sweet responsibility; he might find the joy of defending the life of her who had helped him regain his own.

Elsa turned her head, and found his eyes upon her. Her quiet wisdom whispered that the strain of the moment —Jessica's fears and West's unspoken adoration—needed relaxing, so she smiled, lifted her broad shoulders as if to throw off oppression, and went to the far end of the room, where stood an ancient melodéon, relic of some home-going missionary. The girl seated herself on the moth-eaten plush stool and began to play. The outraged instrument wheezed and sighed over the execution of a coon song—one of those lively syncopations born in the early years of the era of musical massacres before even the tune became with the words an abomination. Her head was thrown back, and her full, rich contralto allowed itself to romp.

One stanza was galloped through, and the melodeon was preluding the second when West's ears caught the faint thrumming of a telephone bell. It was the mine telephone in the office adjacent to the cookhouse. Startled, he hastened over to the pine shack and took down the receiver.

"What the devil's busted loose up topside!" came the querulous plaint from three hundred feet down in the country rock. "Blowers have stopped —skip stopped—not an ounce of steam for the drills! Coolies all on the warpath down here—scared blue——" The voice trailed off into lively profanity.

"I'll hop over to the engine house and see what's the matter," West assured, and hung up. As he hurried into the cookhouse for his rifle, fear began to lay a finger on him. That voice from the depths seemed to presage impending trouble, but from what source it would come, or when, he could not know. With an outward show of calm, he told the women what the message had been. "Better walk over to the engine house with me," he added, and, with a laugh: "I'm like the fellow in that song we've just had —'afraid to go home in the dark.'"

The three covered the distance to the engine house in no time. It was deserted. Though steam purred and hissed through the pipes and cocks of the boilers and from the vents of the fire box red light leaped out to dye all the fire pit, neither the competent Korean who had served as engineer nor his assistant fireman was anywhere in sight. The big wheel fans that drove air down into the depths hung motionless in their screened cages. Not a sigh from the heavy pump, which normally ceased not day or night from its task of lifting water from the sumps. It was as if these slaves of steel had caught the infection of the camp's unrest and gone cold in rebellion. West, to whom the engine house was entirely unfamiliar, stood looking at the boiler face in puzzlement, vainly striving to beat his brain into grappling with an untried problem. Elsa, by his side, coolly assumed initiative:

"Of course we must get those two boys up from three hundred level," she said. "I think I can operate the hoist; that is, I've watched it done. Come!"

They went out under the spidery frame of the hoist, over the shaft mouth, and just beyond the door to the engine house. Away up against the running wheel above their heads was the skip, or car, spitefully jammed there by the deserting skip tender. The big drum beside them glistened under the overhead incandescent, all its snaky steel strands in proper alignment. Elsa

gave the bell cord two jerks and pulled back the wooden sweep of the power lever. Down dropped the car into the square black hole that was the shaft mouth. The great drum purred in deep guttural; from it the cable flowed like spun molasses, black and viscid.

Elsa stood rigid in attention, her eyes on the dissolving circles of the cable about the drum's belly, her right hand gripping the lever. Her whole vital being seemed concentrated in dynamic alertness. So seconds passed. Then among the black coils about the drum a streak of red showed. Instantly the girl's hand pushed the lever forward, braking the momentum of the descending car. The splash of red paint on the cable came off the spool, wavered, and paused level with a beam above Elsa's head. Three hundred feet down, the skip came to rest. An instant of suspense passed; then the *clang-clang* of the signal bell. Very slowly the white hand on the power lever moved back. Lives dangled in the black pit below at the mercy of that hand.

Suddenly a cry broke through the steady purring of the winding drum—a cry high-pitched in extremity of excitement:

"Miss-ee Maclel—Miss-ee Maclel!"

West and Jessica turned and saw the white figure of Chung Fow speeding down from the cookhouse. At West's call, the cook raced up to the shaft mouth, hands and mouth competing in the delivery of his message.

"Miss-ee Maclel, all coolie mans in Pigtown makee go-away chop-chop! All coolie mans an' collie mans' wife an' li'l' boy makee lun away!"

Out of the pit popped the skip. Two white men were its sole passengers. They had revolvers in their hands.

When the car came to rest, and they saw whose hand was at the lever, their eyes widened. Impulsively they reached for that hand and gave it hard grips. Elsa fell back from the drum, stumbling a little in the weakness of reaction from strain; but her eyes shone with thankfulness.

"Plain hell down there!" was the short comment of Mason, night-shift boss on three hundred level. "Had to fight our way to the skip when we got your signal. The beggars were all for crowding on and leaving us below and——"

"Coolie mans makee go-away!" Chung Fow interrupted, intolerant of any incident to detract from the gravity of his news. The two from below heard his explosive bulletin. That and the circumstance of their delivery from mutiny on three hundred level told them the story of the crisis in camp. In a dozen words, West gave them news of Knowles' hasty expedition to the stake line.

"We'll have that bunch below; they can't get up and they won't be hurt," was Mason's dictum. "We're three—your rifle, West, and our two automatics. Chung Fow, old sport, gotchee plenty meat ax, plenty knife?"

The Celestial grinned and pulled from under his tunic an ancient, long-barreled revolver.

"Plenty bettah," was his terse answer.

"Good boy!" the shift boss approved. Then to Elsa and Jessica: "If you'll trust old Chung here to look after you in the cookhouse, we'll just run over and head off that stampede."

The two nodded, and Elsa took the Chinaman's arm with a gay little show of chivalrous attention accepted. Then the three men started on a run for the long alley between big pines which led to Pigtown.

Where a single electric spark hung from a tree limb to illumine a patch of ground by the mule corral, they plumped onto the vanguard of the deserters—ten or a dozen white scarecrows perched on piles of household goods that buried all but the ears of la-

boring donkeys. Behind these the dark, half-revealed shapes of more coolies, a chattering and bawling of human cattle, squealing of donkeys and tinkle of collar bells suggested the mass of the caravan unseen. When the three with weapons in their hands appeared under the light, the foremost of the gang reined in their beasts with short grunts of surprise. Those following collided with the ambulant mountains of dunnage, and the whole procession was thrown into confusion.

Mason stepped a little forward and held up his left hand; his right gripped his automatic close to his waist, the little black barrel leveled on the nearest Koreans.

"Sons of pigs!" he called in the vernacular. "Back to your houses or you will be shot!"

A wavering in the outlandish phalanxes; calls from those behind to the head of the line; yells from frightened children.

"You, An-jo, you turtle with the brains of a mouse"—the American singled out a white-swathed giant in the front rank and raked him with his scorn; "if you don't turn back before I count ten, I'll shoot a hole through you. One—two—three——"

A heavy figure brushed past the speaker's elbow, running with body bent in eagerness. Almost before the three white men could catch their breath the one so suddenly interjecting himself in the scene reached the donkey ridden by the native called An-jo. The crouching figure suddenly straightened, and with a sweep of an arm had the native toppling from the pinnacle of his lares and penates. He fell sprawling in a heap, only to be dragged to his feet by the neckband of his shirt. A strong hand turned the hapless giant toward the core of the cavalcade, then merciless boots propelled him straight through the tangle of burdened beasts, screaming women, and fleeing men toward deserted Pigtown.

"Ai—ai—ai!" wailed the chorus of dismay, and the whole hegira became a race for home. For this was John Strong, returned to his little despotism, and his subjects knew full well his law of the hard hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

An hour later, Knowles and his minute men returned from the stake line. A cheer leaped from the youngsters' throats when they saw the big figure of John Strong waiting to greet them in the streaming light from the cookhouse door. There was a great pumping of hands and slapping of backs all round. To the master of Chon-san these husky young captains of toil paid generous tribute in the coin of youth's admiration for leadership. Now that their directing genius had returned to them, the camp's master of strategy was once more on the ground, a dare-all spirit of hot reprisal against the invaders swept them all into boisterous enthusiasm. Strong had but to give the word and they would have trooped back to the stake line and across it, facing whatever adventure might be awaiting on hostile ground.

It was Rogers, the red-headed cracker of jokes and player of pranks, who put the trophy of the night's expedition on display. With great gravity he pushed through the crowd trooping into the cookhouse and up to the head of the table, which was Strong's place when the family sat down to meat. There he cleared away the clutter of cruets, pepper boxes, and sugar bowls, and with great ceremony draped across the oilcloth a square of bunting, white, with a glowing red globe in its center. In the very middle of the ball of red he set a butter dish—a squatty, unlovely thing of plated silver and glass; then he stepped back and observed the effect

with head cocked critically. Crackling laughter greeted this laying of a trophy at the shrine of the camp's god. Strong shouldered his way to the table and saw what had been done. A slow smile etched his features.

"That's what they call a doily, boss," Rogers explained, nodding his head toward the Japanese national emblem; "a little Jap doily for Chon-san's papa to eat his cream puffs on. Our brown brothers up there beyond the line had the bad taste to come across the stakes to-night and nail this pretty thing topside of Old Glory on a spruce tree. Of course we had to rip it off, and that's what all the fuss was about."

The smile was wiped from Strong's face as he heard the details of the hasty expedition to the stake line, caused by this act of empty bravado on the part of some individual in the Bitsui camp. He carefully folded the sun flag and laid it on a shelf.

"All right, boys," he reassured the crestfallen youngsters who had relished this display of a trophy with the enthusiasm of undergraduates over a captured freshman banner. "You did right to pull this thing down if it was flying over the old home flag; but I guess we won't play horse with it. It's loaded; that's why—loaded with high-power explosive."

Before he sent his aids to their stations, Strong took stock of the events that had transpired during his absence, gleaning from this man and that of the improvised council the tale of happenings up beyond the boundary, of the sedition among the coolies. When Mason took up the story, giving account of the mutiny on three hundred level and how the skip had come down to rescue his partner and himself, Strong's eyes sought the face of Elsa, where she stood a little back from the circle of men. He found her eyes, and the message of unbounded admiration he shot at them brought the color to the girl's cheeks. Simply and with no artifices of false pride, Elsa received the homage of the other men, who pressed around her. She had done nothing but a plain duty—her share of work for the good of the family; she was happy that opportunity came to her.

Once he was in command of full details of the situation in camp, Strong began to give his orders. One man he sent to the engine house to stay on the job until the deserting engineer and firemen could be found and impressed back to duty. Others he dispatched to the mill to set in motion its stilled machinery. He himself strode off alone to the native quarter to rout out of their holes and send back to their tasks the now thoroughly cowed insurgents. The presence of the big white man with the terribly smiting fists galvanized the whole native population into life and activity. No promises Strong made to them; he offset the Japanese campaign of better wages by no offer of more money. Too thoroughly did he know the Korean character to make this error. Instead, John Strong scattered the cloud of disaffection solely by bearing upon the potent leverage of fear. The natives dreaded his wrath as that of a thousand devils. They knew there was no escaping it except by yielding to the will of this shatterer of men's bones. So they worked again. Once more the roar of the stamps gave pulse to the night; dynamite speared into the vitals of earth. Chon-san was at labor.

Early next morning, Strong sought Elsa, finding her finally in one of Pigtown's squalid huts. A new life had been born there, and the white woman was nursing its feeble spark. The man waited patiently until her task was done. "I want to talk with you," he said when she came out into the sunlight, and, with a hand on her arm, he led her beyond the native village out into the open spaces of the pines. Their feet trod a gold-and-brown tapestry of

pine needles; all about were the great masts supporting the stretched canopy of green, through which shone the blue of the sky as through rents in a silken fabric. The air, redolent of balsam, had in it the vigor of early fall.

"Elsa," he began when the trees had shut out the last of the ragged hovels and the aloof spirit of the wilderness had wrapped them about; "Elsa, there come times when I can't run this Chon-san claim alone—times when all this"—a sweep of his hand comprehended the blind fatalism which was the Korean spirit—"gets to me. Then I need help. This is one of those times, Elsa."

"I'm here to help, boss." Her level eyes raised to his had in them the pledge of service, of enduring loyalty. The man dared try to read there something his heart yearned for—something speaking deeper than will to serve. But his resolution died. How could his clumsy eyes see aught of love in woman's? Why, indeed, should love be there? The humility of the man in the rough who knew not woman, her power to command and her prerogative to surrender, overcame fleeting boldness.

"Well, it's this way, Elsa; I must size up a man to use in a ticklish piece of business. If I size him up wrong, we're done for; if right, he'll save Chon-san for us. I've got that man in mind, but I don't know—I don't know. You're as good a judge of men as I am. You'll have to decide for me. Listen."

Then he told her of the plan he had joined with the consul general and Kim Yung-hai to recover the record of Chon-san grant from the royal tombs on Tabong Mountain; how the message from Knowles recalling him to the present crisis had frustrated his desire to go on the secret mission. He laid before her all the elements of chance attending such an excursion into the hinterland of the imperial spirits, not concealing even the grave threat of death to Prince Ito in the Korean nobleman's slip of the tongue. He finished with the simple statement: "I've picked West as the only available man to go."

Swift change passed over Elsa's face, not unobserved by Strong. The momentary cloud he saw in her eyes, as quickly sped, sent a pang to his heart. Jealousy he would have tabbed it, had he ever known what that hurt is.

"Then you don't think he's the right man for the job?" he asked, his voice a little constrained.

"Yes—yes," Elsa hastened to agree. "But——"

"But what?"

"Do you think he knows enough—knows the Korean and the country well enough? Perhaps some difficulty might arise; he might find himself in a tight place——" The girl was striving not to reveal her real reason for not indorsing Strong's choice—her fear lest the man West, newly come to a grip on himself, might not yet have strength to carry through such an adventure should the old call bear upon him. Yet her loyalty to the man whose broken confession she had heard, the sense of trust imposed by that very baring of a tortured soul, would not let her disclose this doubt, nor its cause. How much or how little of Tom West's character Strong might know the girl could not be aware of; she was only determined that nothing she might say should betray aught heard by her in that confessional of the little pines. Strong, understanding women not at all, nevertheless read subterfuge in Elsa's answer, and misconceived its motive. Why did she balk at this man West's being sent to Tabong Mountain? Why if not that she feared some misadventure for him? His old, mulish perversity and domineering spirit of self-will, usually smothered in the presence of the woman he loved, suddenly came to the front.

"I guess West'll do, all right," was his blunt announcement. "He goes."

They walked back to camp with a feeling of strain harrying each. The girl, in her wisdom, could plainly read the cause for Strong's tartness, yet her sense of loyalty to trust would not permit her to undeceive him. The man, on his part, was sensing that primitive guile which, in the long ago, sent Uriah out to fall in the front line of the battle. If Elsa feared to have West go into danger, to danger West would be sent.

Late that afternoon, West, after a long conference with the master of Chon-san in his office, took horse and climbed the valley wall to the eastward, bound for the railroad, Seoul, and the dubious plunge into the land of weird at Tabong Mountain. He went glorying in the trust imposed upon him, sure of his strength, and confident of success. Most precious augur of victory was the fluttering farewell of a handkerchief, seen through screening trees, as his mount took the steep upward trail. She who had brought him back from darkness was giving him "good luck"!

It was a week later that Strong, of Chon-san, began to fight back against the besiegers.

His strategy had been kept locked in his breast until the time for its employment should arrive. Not even Knowles knew the meaning of the order, given casually but in explicit detail, that morning chosen by Strong for the beginning of the offense. He was to take fifty muckers and drillers off work in the mine, provide the muckers with dirt baskets—the wheelbarrows of Korea, but carried on the back instead of trundled—move fifty cases of dynamite up to the end of the new road overlooking the Bitsui camp, and snake the little, old stationary engine as far along the road as he could. Three of the white lads were told off to accompany the moving expedition, and rifles were given them. Strong strode over the road ahead of the strange cavalcade to spy out locations for the final disposition of his forces. Before the day was over the dynamite was in a temporary cache within sight of the Japanese forces, the rusty cone of the little engine had yawed and butted its way down through the scrub to a hidden grove very near the stake line, and the natives had cleared of scrub that portion of one of the two hills converging on the dam site which lay within Chon-san stake line.

These preliminaries completed, Strong employed the next day in the establishment of a camp along the river bank a hundred yards or so below the upheaved mounds of dirt representing the core of the Japanese dam. He even made tent provision for the family's two women. When the sun went down all of Chon-san's forces, even to Chung Fow, grumbling mightily, were on the near frontier within sight of the invaders; not a man left in mill or mine. At nightfall, Strong divided the small number of his fighting youths into two watches, which patrolled the stake line, rifles carried ready against any skulking shadow. Darkness was electric with the feel of war. Nobody, not even the captains of his army, knew what was the daring sally all this preparation anticipated.

Where the Japanese company had laid down its dam between the fists of the two converging hills the staked line of Chon-san ran tangent to that of the Bitsui claim for three hundred feet. Part of this contiguity lay in the bowl of the gorge, where, at one place, the outer works of the building dam almost touched the stakes. From that point the twin lines streamed up the abrupt rise of the westernmost hill, to part about a hundred feet above what would be the top of the finished dam. So the lower knuckle of this hill, which must

be auxiliary with the dam in impounding the waters, lay part in American territory, part in Japanese. Where the end of the dam touched, it was not three yards behind the boundary of the Bitsui concession. So sharp the knife edge of this abutment that not to have utilized it to anchor the western end of the dam would have meant a marked increase of labor and cost to the builders. Therefore, they had builded from this natural buttress, and in so doing had exposed to the fertile ingenuity of the American engineer a fatal weakness.

With his camp disposed and his labor well in hand, Strong attacked with pick, drill, and dynamite this hogback at the dam's end. He had so timed his strategy that the cement emplacement blocks of the dam were all in place, the iron reënforcement rods all set, and much of the box framework for the cement fill erected. To have altered the contour of the dam at this time would entail much loss if it did not involve the shifting of the location altogether. But cutting away all of the contiguous natural barrier lying on his side of the boundary stakes, Strong could weaken that end of the dam to such an extent that the rising waters would surely carry away the undermined natural wall of the basin at point of contact with the cement work, and so let themselves down into their natural channel once more. A flood might ensue, but the Chon-san works—mine and mill—lay three miles behind, and Strong counted on sufficient diminution of the freshet in that distance to discount danger to them.

Unbounded enthusiasm was loosed in the camp of the Americans when Strong's daring coup was revealed. Even the dumb natives, now thoroughly pliant to the will of the master, caught the infection of excitement, and, vaguely discerning the purpose of their labor, made a game of it. Fifty burden bearers, with high basket racks capable of holding two hundred pounds of dirt at a filling strapped to their backs, formed a shuffling cue from the diggings to a little flat on the hill slope where Strong directed the detritus to be spread. Their plaintive singsong of a burden chorus waned not during the twelve hours of daylight. From the puffing stationary engine hose lines led to the drills jacked against the face of "rotten quartz," which was the backbone dike of the hill under attack; their *thrut-thrut-thrut* set all the sun haze of the gorge atremble, like the love songs of giant cicadæ. Twice in each twelve-hour shift dynamite sent its thunders bellowing up the cañon side. Over all the hurly-burly streamed the stars and flame stripes of the flag at the spruce tree's tip—a challenge and a benison in one.

A strange alignment of contending forces it was. Not a hundred yards from where the American shovelers and drillers were attacking the hogback, coolies under Japanese masters were scurrying over the swelling flank of the new dam. A rival cue of toilers with dirt baskets stretched from a point of supply in the basin to the summit of the fill, there to dump their burdens. Carpenters were hammering into place the framework for the cement facing. Dynamite cracked under the face of obstructing bowlders. From time to time a little Japanese, trimly clad in khaki, would stroll the length of the Bitsui stake line, scrupulously cleaving to his own side of the joint boundary, and survey the work being done under the white men's direction. Always their faces were grave and imperturbable; never by so much as a look did they betray recognition of an alien presence. Nor did the white men depart from frigid indifference. They might be quarrying marble in Vermont for all outward manifestation of tension shown.

It was the third day after the beginning of Strong's attack upon the hogback that this attitude of armed indifference was changed, and by the Japanese. At noon, just before the drillers were ready to touch off the first blast, a stocky little brown man, who wore an American style slouch hat, walked to the joint boundary above the American diggings, picked out the bluff figure of Strong in a group below, and beckoned to him. Strong climbed the hill, and came to pause just where a blunt-headed stake matched a second. He nodded curtly, his eyes studying the smooth, brown face under the shadowing hat brim.

"Mr. Strong," the Japanese began, with hardly a trace of accent, "what is the purpose of your operations below here, may I ask?"

"Are you an engineer?" Strong countered, making no effort to soften the edge of hostility in his voice.

"Boston Tech, class of nineteen hundred," the other answered, with no little pride.

"Well, then, Mr. Boston Tech, I don't reckon I'll have to show you a blue print to let you know what my purpose is," was Strong's rejoinder. The studied politeness of the Japanese, in such contrast to his own rudeness, served but to anger Strong the more.

"I greatly regret—ah—that you see the necessity of these operations," came the carefully articulated rejoinder. "My people are keeping carefully within the law, and you—excuse me—seem not to be so scrupulous. Of course we will have to take measures to protect ourselves against your aggression and——"

"Go the limit!" the white man interrupted. "If you Japs have any law to stop me cutting where I please inside my own boundary, spring it. But I'll build such a fire under you in Washington that you'll yell for help. Now go to it!"

Just the suspicion of a flush crept up under the tan of the narrow, patrician face; the eyelids lowered themselves. For the fraction of a second the two men stood measuring each other with hostile eyes; then the Japanese lifted his hat and bowed. "Good day, Mr. Strong," he said, turned and walked back to his camp.

That night the stationary engine supplying steam for Strong's drills was blown to twisted scrap by a charge of dynamite.

Before dawn, Rogers and Daniels, heading a crowd of coolies, had gone back to Chon-san and dragged up to the new camp heavy sheets of corrugated iron. Under Strong's directions, these were fashioned into a rude blockhouse, with rifle slits commanding all approaches from the Japanese side of the hill of contention. The crazy affair of dull, gleaming metal stood on the crest of the hogback, a few inches within the American stake line, and day and night three rifles thrust their ugly snouts through the vents. A similar blockhouse reared itself on the Japanese side of the line.

This was war.

Upon the Chon-san family settled a grim spirit of resolve; this was a fight to the last ditch with them. New lines were graven in the faces of the youngsters; they chopped short their speech, pared their sleep down to minimum, tightened their nerves against the time when rifles might speak and dynamite be used to rend flesh instead of rocks. Strong was their captain indomitable. He alone of all the men knew the hazard of West's venture to recover the imperial record—the dubious trump card he still had left in his hand. He knew that here against the face of the enemy's dam he was but sparring for time until the outcome of that venture should be determined. It was a precarious game. With the destruction of the stationary engine, hand drills had

to take the place of the steam-driven points—slow work. But his observation of the outcropping on the top of the hogback assured him that, once the dike of rotten quartz was pierced, the backbone of the ridge would be gone; what lay on the Japanese side of the boundary was but loose dirt and shale. It would not hold against water pressure.

The man was a dynamo of energy. With tongue and fist he whipped the Koreans into killing effort. Nor did he spare himself. More than once his was the brawn that swung the sledge against the drillhead; relief from pent-up strain came in these herculean blows. Hour on hour Strong waited the sally from across the line which would mean handgrips, loss of Chon-san, and for some of the family certain death. The man of action dared not think; he could only drive—drive!

Once more the veiled genius of this land of death and decay, whose face no white man may see, moved to engulf in chaos the strangers' puny destinies.

On a cold morning in October—it was the twenty-sixth, and the year 1909—Prince Ito, Bismarck of the Orient, stepped from his railroad carriage to the station platform in the Manchurian city of Harbin. Russian dignitaries moved forward to greet him. Also out of a crowd of onlookers stepped a ragged Korean, An Chung-Keun by name. An whipped a revolver from beneath his shirt and shot Ito dead. So passed the master sculptor of modern Japan's destinies, and, so many maintain, Korea's best friend.

CHAPTER XV.

A ghostly sampan crept out of the mists writhing like sluggish white snakes through channels between the Thousand and One Islands. Its sail hung limp in the windless dawn, and to the propulsion of sweeps the snubbed bow crowded in languid deliberation through waves fat and sleek as train oil. Black shapes of grotesque islands, clotting vapors, the age-old lines of this crawling craft; here was a picture like those dreamed by Chinese artist and glazed into a ginger jar.

The fog veils lifted and fell, revealing, concealing. On toward the faint blue smudge of the coast crawled the sampan. Behind it, not many miles, dodged its shadow—a second craft ghostly as the other and as deliberate. Up through the gulf from Chemulpo the two had wended, one leading, the other pursuing with a casual innocence denying suspicion. In the first sat Tom West and the Korean seneschal, Kim Yung-hai. On the high poop of the following craft, Ichi Tsuyama, the little spy of the Bitsuis, squatted on his heels, smoking innumerable little pipes.

How Tsuyama, keeping faithful watch over the house of Kim Yung-hai since that night he had surprised John Strong leaving it, had come to the deduction which started him dogging the trail of the Korean and this strange white man, his companion, is a matter cognate to the realm of Oriental rationality, which no Occidental may fathom. To say that the acute agent of the Japanese company had discovered that the white man he had seen depart from Kim Yung-hai's house in the latter's company late one night had come from Chon-san and must therefore be an agent of John Strong is to give sufficient tab to the mental processes which had finally placed him on the poop of this furtive sampan.

A change of scene—another picture from a Ming screen, and still the relation of the two wayfarers and the conscientious shadow persists. Mists still, but they stream like smoke across the tops of stunted pines, lie in pools of white where gorges split the sides of Tabong Mountain. From under their

concealing masses sound the roar of secret waters, full-throated as a tiger's challenge. All about, when the shredding vapors permit a view, are piled up crags and organ pipes of gray rock, naked, foreboding.

Coolies toiled up the slopes, bearing on their shoulders the "chairs" wherein West and his Korean guide were borne. Less than a mile behind them, Ichi Tsuyama, now assured of the destination his quarry sought, assured also of the object of their quest, pursued leisurely and similarly vehicled. He smiled many creasy smiles as he followed on to the burial place of the kings.

It was near noon when the chair carriers of the twain ahead stopped abruptly and set down their burdens. West, looking out from beneath the peaked sunshade above his head, was startled by an apparition close at hand. A great stone Buddha towered a full fifty feet up out of the green scrub. For generations uncounted those veiled eyes had looked out upon this mist-swathed wilderness; seen Buddhism pass from the land, and the precepts of the Great Teacher made a mockery. Unchanged, nevertheless, Buddha's benign smile.

They had come to the boundary of the sacred burial ground. Kim Yung-hai, directing the chair coolies to retrace their steps back to a primitive rest-house a mile or so down the mountain —he wanted no observers—led the way past the great Buddha and into a wide grove of very ancient pines. West followed, wondering. Here were ruins of long-past grandeur. The roots of a pine had tilted askew a heavy stone lantern there on the right—a three-storied pagoda lantern with its empty spaces filled with nodding grasses. On the left the tremendous terraces of an altar, square on square; a tree had found lodgment where its sacrificial fires once burned in dreadful hecatombs. Flights of steps led upward to blank space, the pavilion they had once given access to a crumbling heap of tiles. Effigies of monarchs who had aforetime hurled back the Mongol hordes lay half concealed by weeds. Everywhere the impressive melancholy of decay.

The Korean gentleman guided his companion to a tiled court at the far edge of the sacred grove. Here, in the midst of square-cut flags, between whose edges thin wedges of grass had grown, stood the most remarkable monument of them all. It was a giant turtle, carved of a single bowlder. Perhaps twelve feet from reptilian head to the sculptured shreds of seaweed—Chinese fancy denoting great age—that streamed from the rear of the domed shell, the thing was colossal. There was no guessing its tons of weight.

"We are here," Kim announced simply, and he unwrapped a paper-covered parcel he had carried with him, disclosing a hank of tightly woven hemp, oil-drenched. This he affixed to a stick to make a rough torch. Then without hesitation he walked to the curved beak of the turtle's head, and, back to the sculptured thing, took three steps directly forward. He paused in the middle of a large stone flag, took one more step to the flag's far corner, and there leaped lightly in the air, to bring his full weight down in impact upon the stone. Twice he leaped, and slowly the great Turtle Stone tipped its nose upward. A third time, and beneath the head of the stone beast, uptilted, a widening crack of darkness showed the entrance to a subterranean chamber.

"My ancestors were wonderful craftsmen," was Kim's only comment in answer to the wonder expressed on the white man's features. "Come!"

He lit the torch, dropped to his hands and knees, and disappeared beneath the shell of the giant turtle. West, not a little squeamish, made shift to follow.

His feet touched stone steps as he wriggled backward; nor as the light of day was suddenly dimmed could he help feeling that he was descending to a living tomb. Could the turtle's hidden levers be wholly relied upon? Might not some outraged spirit of a dead king come to swing down the stone, once the victims were trapped?

Had West known that not the wan eyes of spirits, but the crafty half-moon orbs of Ichi Tsuyama, his body concealed behind a crumbling lantern, had witnessed the descent of the twain into the sepulcher of the kings, real reason for fear might have been his.

The smoky glare of the torch lit him through a vaulted chamber, all painted in frieze and panel with barbaric colors. Their path lay down an aisle formed by rows of gigantic stone sarcophagi, ponderous as the hulls of small yachts, hideous in their carvings of grinning dogs' heads. Rock walls hurled back their footfalls magnified to the noise of anvil blows. The air was heavy with a musty, mushroom odor. Altogether a grim and ghastly place!

Kim, not at all perturbed by the sanctity they were violating, proceeded to a sarcophagus at the far end of the double row of dim shapes, and, holding his torch high, clambered up its side. West noticed that there was no stone covering for the long sandstone casket; it yawned open to the painted ceiling.

"Her late majesty, Queen Min's," Kim flung back over his shoulder. "She expected to occupy it, but when the Japanese killed her and burned her body nothing remained but two finger bones; these the emperor buried elsewhere, for the queen, you see, was not complete."

He finished his naïve explanation by diving into the stone trough and bringing to light a mass of crackling documents, some of them vellum bound. Cross-legged on the floor by the side of the empty sarcophagus, the Korean bent his attention to a close examination of them. After several minutes, he withdrew one from a sheaf, with a little whistle of satisfaction.

"Your record of the Chon-san grant," he said; "cut from the book of imperial records at the time his majesty feared the prying Japanese. See, here it is in French and Korean court language, paralleled, and here"—he pointed to a broad splotch of involuted ideographs at the lower left-hand corner of the document—"the great vermilion seal of majesty, old as these tombs here."

West's hand trembled a little as he seized the broad sheet and, by the light of the torch, studied the French text inscribed thereon. No doubting it; here was a description of "those lands lying along and about Chon-san River and the riparian rights to said river"—that thing counted precious by John Strong in his fight to save the mines. Exultation welled up in the man's breast. Here, in these ghostly aisles of the dead kings, he had achieved the object of his mission, justified the confidence imposed in him by Strong. She—the woman who was his guiding angel—she would know that the man she had restored to righteousness and honor was one worthy once more of trust.

West folded the precious paper into a small packet and stowed it deep in a pocket of his jacket. Then he followed his guide back to the dim slit of white which marked the uptilted Turtle Stone.

Kim paused to extinguish his torch, and West went ahead of him up the short flight of steps. He stooped to crawl through the opening, and even as he did so he thought he saw the sharp edge of the tipped stone tremble and sink a little downward. Was that delusion born of the near presence of a hundred ranging spirits; or was that faint rumbling—sound of stone rubbing stone—reality?

West scrambled through the opening, and was just rising to his feet when he heard a dreadful cry. He turned.

There was the head of Kim Yung-hai —his head and two clawing arms only —face empurpled, distorted beyond human mold—and the Turtle Stone descending.

The white man turned to rush back, as if by the strength of his hands he could check that great leaf of stone closing, closing like the leaf of a book. Then he saw the short, squatty figure of a Japanese—one whom he had never seen—step lightly away from the lever stone controlling the hidden machinery of the pendant turtle and approach him. The man came swiftly like a stalking cat; his stubby arms were held out and a little away from his body; on his round, ruddy face was the look of a demon.

All this in an instant. The next West's stunned mind leaped to one sure conclusion. And as he backed away from Ichi Tsuyama his hand whipped to the holster hidden beneath his jacket. Out jumped a heavy revolver. West fired from the hip. Ichi Tsuyama staggered a bit, but came right on, crouching in the attitude of a wrestler. Again West shot, and again.

Tsuyama dropped on his face, his muscular arms still gripping before him, like the bent claws of a crab. Once he kicked, then lay still.

Cold horror bludgeoned West almost to his knees. He raised his eyes from the sprawling blot of kimono-clad figure at his feet to the Turtle Stone. There, caught under tons, that blur of white——

He gurgled in his throat, turned, and fled. Not down the path of their ascent to the resthouse and the waiting coolies, but crashing through the scrub and into the wilderness of Tabong Mountain. The man's mind was turned by terror. He knew not whither he fled; only why. Ever behind him echoed that choking cry—the cry of mortal agony coming from beneath the Turtle Stone.

Blinded, tortured by thorns, tripped by crawling vines, West plunged on. He forded torrents, was hurled from slippery rocks into white pools, scaled dragon's teeth of rocks. Time ceased to be; only terror existed.

Then, when it was dark, he saw a light, crawled through the slime of a rice paddy to it, and plumped into a circle of affrighted faces about a floor table. He signed that he wanted to drink. A flagon of fiery rice gin was in his hands—at his lips. He gulped a pint.

Now was Tom West descended surely into that hemisphere of darkness whence his escape had been so torturing. That first drink of burning rice gin catapulted him straight to the pit. After that, nightmare.

Korea, the baleful land of shadows, stretched out a hand to seize him and pull him under. Days and nights there were none; only certain moments when liquor scorched his throat and other moments when a voice of agony cried to him from beneath a crushing stone—cried horribly. Everything forgot but that voice and the way to still it—the liquor way! Dreams—agonies—wanderings—darkness——

CHAPTER XVI.

Peter Haddon, Consolidated correspondent, was smiting the keys of his typewriter with a minstrel's hand. His was the burning flame of creation. An epic surge and swing of galloping narrative carried him faster than flying fingers could register. Crisp phrases leaped to paper unbidden; shadings and high lights of drama and emotion took tone and color without conscious effort. The story—the big story he had come to the Orient to get—was writing itself.

He was in Chefoo, the North China port just a step across the gulf from Korea; a drab room in the Beach Hotel housed him. A little more than a month

had passed since the bullets fired on the station platform in Harbin had overturned all the world of the Orient. A tremendous month for Peter Haddon! First the dash up the railroad line to the Manchurian city, and frenzied grubbing of scrapped facts of the assassination, blind groping for the secret springs of diplomacy that had sent Prince Ito on the mission to the Russians which had death at its end. Then the return to Seoul, boiling with excitement and the bitterness of Japanese impulse of reprisal. There had lain the heartbreak for Haddon. Blind walls everywhere raised about the news; dispassionate eyes of officials denying there was news when the very reflex of it made the air electric. A blanket was dropped by the Japanese masters in the Korean government seat over the whole incident of the slaying of Ito and resultant activity. Not by the most persistent efforts could so much as an edge of that blanket be lifted by the hand of the news seeker.

With Bronson-Tighe, the cynical press spokesman for the government, Haddon had broken in white heat; it had come nearly to a matter of blows, so furious the American news gatherer's resentment against the other's smug censorship. Then—the thunderclap, which had sent Haddon racing to neutral Chefoo, where no brown hand ruled the cable, nor dictated how little of what was known could be told to the world beyond the Yellow Sea.

To cable the facts of the dénouement in Seoul up to the extreme word limit set by heavy tolls for the shooting of news underseas had been his first step. Now he was clothing with living flesh the bare bones of news he had flashed across the Pacific. He was writing, for mailing, all he knew of a drama of the East—a drama of things behind the veil. It was the story of Chon-san and of John Strong:

Until the swift hand of the hidden government in Seoul leaped out in reprisal last week, the assassination of Prince Ito was simply one with the history of palace politics and secret intrigues old as the Hall of Congratulations in Kyeng-Pok palace yard. Ito went the dark way the feet of royal ministers and kings' ambassadors have trod since time began for the Far East. His taking off was but a modern instance, striking enough, of an ancient tradition.

But with the startling development of December 10th, Ito's assassination becomes for America, for all the world of the Saxon, an intimate event, with results grave enough to set all white men to thinking.

For to-day are held *incommunicado* and under guard of Japanese jailers forty-seven Koreans and one American, John Strong, of Chon-san. With the natives, Strong is charged with having entered into the conspiracy which brought death to Ito. He will be tried for his life; in fact, he will be fighting for life before the steamer bearing this narrative will be out of sight of Japan, bound eastward.

He must face Japanese judges, without jury—the Japanese code is modeled after the Code Napoleon; he must rely upon a Japanese lawyer to defend him. Sentiment of the governing Japanese is hostile to him. What may be the evidence against him his prosecutors are keeping a jealous secret. But it is believed the Japanese have linked John Strong's name with that of a former Korean palace chamberlain, Kim Yung-hai, known to be a strong patriot and partisan of the anti-Japanese propaganda among the natives. Kim Yung-hai has been missing from his home in Seoul since the assassination; nor have the tireless efforts of Japanese spies succeeded in discovering his whereabouts.

Before the bar of Japanese justice, John Strong stands accused of conspiracy to commit murder. But behind that surface fact lies an epic the like of which is rarely sung in modern times. It is an epic of the Saxon—of the Saxon at labor in a barbarous land, combating the craft and might of an unseen hand, which would snatch the prize of his labor. Gold—rich, yellow gold!

For when gendarmes of the government came to take John Strong prisoner on the conspiracy charge, he and the fighting Americans of the Chon-san mines were defending with rifles the mining claim a powerful Japanese company was trying to take by force. The day the armed agents from Seoul appeared to serve the warrant war between the intrenched camp of the Americans and the Japanese besiegers trembled on the crooking of a single trigger finger. So had the epic of Chon-san reached its apogee.

From this point onward Peter Haddon told the story of John Strong's fight as he knew it and saw it through eyes still fresh for the mystery and latency of the East. Knowing that sure reflex from truth would strike back across the Pacific to further the defense of the accused man, he revealed all the details of the night rendezvous at the house of Kim Yung-hai, omitting only the participation of the consul general; told in his quick, nervous style of the plan there joined to recover from the tombs of the kings on Tabong Mountain the imperial record of the Chon-san grant, and thus prove the Americans' right to the precious river. His nimble mind leaped ahead and constructed the burden of accusation the Japanese would bring against Strong, at trial, because of this very meeting at the Korean's house, by some magic of hidden eyes discovered to the masters of the land.

That Strong, unable to go himself in search for the hidden records, had sent one of his men, and how this man had been swallowed up by the shadows of a ghostly borderland: this put a telling climax to Haddon's wonder tale.

If the tiger-haunted gorges of Tabong Mountain yield this seeker after proof in the graves of kings; if Tom West returns from the frontier of the spirits bearing the record of Chon-san grant, he will not only save John Strong's life, but preserve Chon-san for the Americans. For by the success of his mission he will prove that Strong's association with Kim Yung-hai was not for the purpose of plotting assassination; and the text of the record will refute the Japanese claim to river rights at the mines.

All of Haddon's soul went into that manuscript: the soul of a truthteller and fighter for justice. When the last period was placed and he tipped back in his chair to blow a luxurious cloud of smoke at the ceiling, he saw in the blue haze the path of a mail ship across the Pacific, a thick envelope delivered at a manager's desk in San Francisco, and then over all a great country the blossoming of his strong flower—his story. Washington would read it. Hectic representatives in Congress—so he saw the scene in wreathing smoke—would rise to inquire what the party in power was doing to protect the interests of American life and capital in the Far East. And then Washington would remember that fourteen thousand miles away in the mountains of Korea were those having claim under the ægis of the eagle.

The mail boat for Shanghai was leaving at ten o'clock that evening. After dinner, Haddon strolled down to the Bund and climbed to the deck of the *Stereforth,* there to have a confidential interview with the purser. Crackling script left in that officer's hand insured that the precious envelope given to his care would be mailed at the American post office in the big port immediately upon arrival.

This weighty business over with, the correspondent let his feet carry him where they willed; he was wrapped in a delicious sense of ease after strain. All unaware, he drifted down into the shady quarter of the deep-sea boarding house and grogshop. He was brought to himself by a timid touch upon his elbow.

"You are an American, sir," came a husky whisper out of the half dark. "Could you——"

Haddon turned a little petulantly and surveyed the dim figure of a man in wreck—stooped shoulders, head swinging in slow palsy, fluttering hands. A beach comber of the true type.

"How did you know I was American?" Haddon quizzed, and his hand went to his change pocket. "A hooker of white gin, eh?" The wreck shivered and gripped his thin jacket tighter about his throat.

"No—no, sir; if you please, just let me walk with you a little way and talk to you." There was a depth of plead-

ing in the voice at Haddon's elbow which touched his sympathy. Here was a beach comber; but somehow his voice did not ring true to form.

"In here," Haddon suggested. "A little drink won't hurt either of us." He led the way into a smoky barroom, half filled with groups of oilers, stokers, and other casual pirates off deep waters. Finding a table at the back of the room, Haddon motioned his companion to a chair and called for drinks. In the stronger light of the bottle house, he saw better the features of the waif; there lay misery and despair unplumbable. Something else in the eyes, too: a misty vacuity which fought to displace reason and triumphed in a breath, only to be pushed back by the stronger impulse. The man's hand went out to his drink with a rush; then, as if in saving grace of shame, raised the glass to his lips for only a sip. But denial registered in that sip.

"I—I must ask you to help me," he began. "No, not with money; with advice, if you will be so good. I am very confused—ah—my mind, you understand——" Haddon nodded. If this was a new dodge, he was tolerant; if straight, a peep behind a mask of misery promised. Peter Haddon was avid for all life's pitiful perfidies.

"The American consul would not listen to me," the man continued, in that curiously contradictory voice of his—a voice edged with culture. "He said I was either drunk or insane, which I am—both at times; at other times only one or the other. My mind, it plays tricks, you understand. Part of it is not there. I do not remember why I came to Chefoo, for instance; or when. I only know I am here." He took a second restrained sip. Haddon's eyes were on his face searchingly.

"When I remember best I have a strong feeling I should be somewhere else than in Chefoo—that I have something important to do somewhere else. I—ah——" Now the eyes were wholly vacuous; the jaw let down. A horrible face it was.

"Well, where should you be?" Haddon rapped out sharply. Again reason crawled back to the eyes, like a flickering light in a dark room.

"Korea, perhaps," the wreck ventured. "More likely Manila, with my regiment." He flipped thin fingers to his lips, as if to check escaping words. "The paper makes it seem as if Korea was the proper place—the place where I really ought to be. But the paper's all scrawly with red marks. When I try to read the red marks crawl all over the black ones, and so, of course——"

"What paper?" Haddon demanded.

"This," said the beach comber, and his hand plunged deep into a side pocket to bring out a heavy folded packet, black with grime about its edges. Haddon unfolded it and spread it out on the table. The heavy involutions of a vermilion seal at the lower left-hand corner first caught his eye, then parallel columns of script—ideographic and Roman. His eye traveled through the first paragraph of the Roman text, which was in French. It came upon the word "Chon-san."

Haddon suddenly straightened. His eyes launched a lightning stroke at the white face across the table.

"Where did you get this?" He spaced his words in trembling eagerness.

"That's one of the things I cannot just remember," the other faltered. "Sometimes I hear a man scream—oh, horribly; and then I nearly remember where I got that paper with the crawling red lines. I had the paper—he screamed—ugh!"

The fellow was lifting his glass to his lips when Haddon put out his hand, took it from him, and poured the liquor onto the floor.

"Tom West!" he said.

"Eh? Who did you say?"

"Tom West," Haddon repeated, as if he were summoning a man from trance. The waif's eyes lighted in a sudden flicker.

"Yes. That is I," he answered. Haddon was on his feet, and his hand went out to touch the thin shoulder. His speech came almost tenderly:

"Come on, Tom. You and I are going back to Korea—together."

CHAPTER XVII.

Ten days after that encounter in the mean streets of Chefoo, Peter Haddon stepped from a railroad carriage to the station platform in Seoul. He summoned two husky coolies, and they, making a chair of their hands, carried a sick man from the train to a ricksha. Haddon took his place in the little carriage beside the limp figure so that a supporting arm could be around the other's shoulders, and he directed the puller to the house of Bostell, American consul general.

Once they were trundling through the crooked streets beyond South Gate, Haddon drew a long breath, as if to throw off a muffling weight of anxiety. For anxiety had been his in full measure. Long days of waiting for a steamer from Chefoo to Chemulpo, with sure knowledge that each day made more exigent his presence in the Korean capital, had been bad enough; added to that was the strain of caring for a dying flame—the flame of reason in the husk of a man. Translation from the slums of Chefoo to the cleanliness of a bed and security of a roof had worked reaction upon the ragged nerves of Tom West. Drugs administered to deaden the cry of tortured flesh for the sedative of drink but served to heighten the reflex of exhausted vitality. After that half hour of revelation in the grogshop, West had sunk into a strange listlessness, from which no spur could lift him. Speech seemed to have left him, together with all volition.

Yet ordered memory, the ability to call from the past a clear narrative of circumstance: for West to do this on the witness stand would be the saving of John Strong's life. He must—he must! For ten days Peter Haddon mentally had launched this imperative command at the helpless wreck with all his power of willing.

Bostell, summoned to the gate of his compound by Haddon's abrupt orders, was thrown into profound amazement at sight of the correspondent and that other shrunken figure in the ricksha.

"West—Tom West, who went to Tabong Mountain with Kim," Haddon explained in a breath. "He's got it—the story that'll save Strong. And the record of Chon-san grant from the tombs—here!" He patted the breast pocket of his jacket.

"But, my dear boy, what's the matter with——"

"You've got to take him in, Bostell. Don't dare put him into the Methodist Hospital—the Jap agents would be nosing around to find out who he is and where he came from. We'll keep him under cover at your house until—until he comes back." Haddon tapped his forehead significantly.

Bostell jumped to action. He had his servants carry the sick man into the house and up to a clean, airy room filled with good old New England furniture, even to the rag rugs on the floor. A runner, dispatched to the Methodist compound, brought Doctor Hartridge to the consulate. To him, and to Bostell, who hovered close, like an inquisitive wren, Haddon told the story of his encounter with Tom West. He displayed the vermilion sealed record of Chon-san grant, repeating the strange scraps of memory West had let fall concerning the recovery of that document: how a man had screamed—screamed horribly.

Haddon accompanied the consul general downstairs to his office, leaving the physician alone with his patient. Almost before the door was closed behind them, Haddon was pressing the other for news. Bostell, flustered, slicked back his hair with nervous pats of his hand; his eyes batted.

"For Strong things look about as bad as they could be," he began. "Nobody can see him. He's herded in jail with all the other conspirators, the natives, and the authorities have not even permitted me to have a talk with him. Three days ago all of them were lined up for pleading behind closed doors. Case opens day after to-morrow. All tried together—not separately. That makes it bad, because there are whispers—you know Japanese methods for securing confessions; some of those forty-seven poor devils of Koreans will swear Strong's life away—anything to escape the——" Bostell made a picture with his hands which Haddon understood. He shuddered.

"But your fine hand has already begun to make itself felt, my dear boy," the little man piped in gusty enthusiasm. "I don't know what you cabled from Chefoo, but I imagine it stirred up the folks at Washington. Received a code message yesterday from Harris, at Tokyo—my superior, you know—telling me to see that Strong was adequately represented by consul; and Hagiwara, government counselor, called yesterday to assure me that our man would have every protection. He 'greatly regretted' and all that."

"Wait until my mail story—the big story—reaches Frisco!" Haddon bubbled exultingly. "That will put the screws on the Japanese brother, or I miss my guess."

"Haddon—Haddon! You didn't write anything—ah—inflammatory!" Bostell's hands fluttered like shot birds. "Remember, you're back in Korea, and the press laws here are, to say the least, emphatic."

The young chap grinned and spread out his hands. "How do things stand up at Chon-san?" he shot the question.

"Deadlocked," was Bostell's answer. "With Strong's arrest, the Bitsui engineers pushed the construction of the dam, unhindered; shut off the river. Mines closed down; Strong's labor scattered; Knowles, his assistant, and the two women of the camp are down here; rest of the little family are still on the job, ready to resist with guns any attempt of the Bitsuis to invade the claim. They're fighters, those boys up there—fighters!"

Haddon was silent for a time, pondering possibilities of the future. Then:

"Supposing that chap upstairs is gone—gone for all time; what then?"

"I will follow my original intention," Bostell answered, his chin coming up with a sharp little bob of resolution. "I will go on the witness stand for Strong, tell of our meeting at Kim Yung-hai's house, of my secret message to his majesty which brought permission for the search on Tabong Mountain, and of how this West came down from Chon-san as Strong's agent, and by me was introduced to Kim. That will establish Strong's motive for his association with Kim Yung-hai—the fact upon which the government evidently hangs its accusation."

The younger man looked his admiration for the other's spirit of sacrifice. In an instant their hands were clasped.

"Count on me as a supporting witness!" Haddon exclaimed. "Our testimony and the record from Tabong Mountain should go far."

Just then the doctor entered. Both turned eyes of inquiry upon him.

"Bad," said Doctor Hartridge. "Complete physical collapse and, I fear, waning mental power, which is likely to grow worse instead of better unless we can bring him back with some stiff

reminder—break the cloud by some sort of mental explosion."

The consul general and correspondent exchanged glances of helplessness. Scheme they might to find a path out of the wilderness of Oriental subtleties; but how to bring back to a mind in fog the light of reason was beyond their knowledge.

It was the fourth day of the conspiracy trial. For three full days witnesses had been heard, confessions read, droning interpretations passed between witless Koreans in the witness stand and the Japanese prosecutor.

John Strong felt himself far apart from the world and from his own these days. Not since his arrest had he had speech with one of his own race; no word of his mother tongue had come to him without the reverse English of accent. The bustling little Japanese lawyer he had retained had exhibited a professional solicitude which irritated rather than comforted the big white man. Deep hate—hate that ran away down to the taproot of his soul—possessed John Strong. Hate for the people who had thus herded him with native suspects to be tried for his life; hate for the mummery and grave court proceedings—ponderous machinery of menace for him.

But one bit of light in all the gray of those days buoyed him. On the first row of the spectators' benches were his friends—Knowles and his wife and Elsa McClellan. Here was part of the family come to give him heart in his journey through the shadow. Their eyes sent him the messages of hope and of confidence denied their lips.

This fourth day two more faces were added. Bostell and Haddon came to sit down by the three of Chon-san. The look Bostell flashed at Strong as their eyes met was hard to read. Something of suppressed excitement, of triumph hardly permitting itself to be hoped for, lay in them.

Strong's lawyer was on his feet, addressing the court. His rapid harangue in the Japanese was too swift for the prisoner to understand, but he saw that it made an impression. The three judges put their heads together for conference; in the end one of them gave an order to a court officer, and the little lawyer grinned his triumph. A wait, then the door to the witness room opened. Two gendarmes entered, supporting by the shoulders a white man, whose shuffling step proclaimed extremity of weakness. It was West.

He was sworn in the Japanese style and helped to the witness chair.

At first sight of him, Strong leaned forward with a sudden movement, as if this were an apparition come from the nether land of spirits. His hands clasped themselves, and he shot a glance toward the bench where sat Chon-san's representatives. He saw Elsa McClellan lift her hand to her mouth as if to stifle a cry; her face went ashen. Then she mastered herself, and her eyes flew to the face of the figure in the witness chair, resting there with compelling strength.

A question was put to West. He answered vaguely, giving his name. The man's whole face was slack and flaccid. Something, Strong could not determine what, was missing there. Lines of suffering, yes; lines such as Strong had seen that night when he rescued this man from the mob in Chemulpo. But the eyes!

Another question, and the witness seemed not to comprehend. The Japanese lawyer repeated it in his most correct English.

A little cry from the witness chair—half a sob. The man West was starting forward, his eyes straining, his mouth suddenly gone tight-lipped. Strong followed the direction of his tense gaze and saw Elsa McClellan

smiling up to the face in the witness chair.

West seemed to shiver. Both of his thin hands were lifted to cover his eyes for an instant. When they came down cloudiness was gone from the eyes; they burned clear and strong—burned like hot points of carbons in the cavernous shadows of the sockets. The witness answered the question, then, in a clear voice.

The lawyer gently led him to answer a preliminary query, which set him easily into the narrative of that venture to Tabong Mountain and the quest of the Chon-san record. West, keeping his eyes always on those of the woman who had brought him back from the shadows thus a second time, told his tale steadily, painstakingly. Once he was interrupted by the counsel. Did he have with him that document John Strong had sent him to find? West brought from his pocket the folded and smudged sheet, which was passed to the judges. They scanned it with suppressed interest.

No detail did the witness omit. He had to steady himself when he recited the circumstance of the exit from the subterranean tombs of the kings—how the Turtle Stone came down to crush out a life, and how he had shot to defend his own. But the story was finished, even to the shame that had followed upon that first burning draft of liquor snatched to assuage the terrors of the flight through the wilderness. As he was half carried back to the witness room, the look he gave Strong was one of sacrifice triumphant. It said Chon-san was saved for the family—saved even at a price.

The shades were drawn in the New England bedroom of Bostell's house. It was so dark there that the face of the figure on the bed was mercifully softened. Peace had passed a smoothing hand over all the lines of shame, erasing that which was pitiful and helpless, leaving only an innocence like that of childhood. So is the Great Change kindest even when it seems most cruel.

Two figures drew away from the bed and stood together in the shadows. With a stifled sigh, the woman let her head fall on the man's shoulder, and one of her hands crept slowly about his neck. In the gesture was something of the child finding protection from the dark. She whispered:

"He tried, John. Oh, he tried! And because he tried he was a man. That he should win just was not to be; that's all."

"Some One chalks that up on His time sheet just the same, little girl," John Strong answered. "'He tried.' What better reference could a good workman want when he goes up to the Big Job?"

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By Frederick Irving Anderson

Author of "A Million a Minute," Etc.

The interesting case of a wealthy New Yorker who had been an expatriate for many years but insisted that an elaborate dinner should be served in his home each evening in the event of his sudden arrival. To have the board spread for him to the last crumb! Every night! And never sit down! To keep his distance! Three thousand miles of distance! For ten years! This affair well deserved its fate of coming under the scrutiny of the police. It were easy to dwell on the follies of the wealthy—but this is a detective story.

IN time, "Byrnes luck" had come to be a byword. It was something of a ten-strike affair that roused wonder and admiration in law-abiding citizens; and fear, touched with superstition, in thieves. It was a fact that when the lightning of violence struck, here or there, it usually found the police deputy on the spot, ready and waiting—surprised in nothing, except possibly that it had delayed so long.

There was nothing mysterious about this, however—merely the collection of data, and their proper correlation. There was nothing fortuitous about it—unless one would call a cat lucky when its long vigil at a mouse hole is finally rewarded by a fine dinner. The cat is in possession of data, handed down by a hungry, observant line of forbears, indicating that such events are prone to emerge from such places. The trick is in recognizing the places; the rest is simply the cultivation of infinite patience and an air of being absent.

There is nothing fortuitous about lightning. It strikes—by invitation. Invisible lines of force cluster about certain spots on earth, sending out feelers. When these become sufficiently powerful in point of numbers, the bolt is unable to resist the attraction. Byrnes, the police deputy, applied the same idea to his business. He made complex card catalogues of persons and places that are continually sending out feelers, which in due course become sufficiently powerful to tempt the lightning of violence to strike. Once having catalogued the prospects, the rest of the business was merely to play the cat at these figurative mouse holes. Given time, the event was bound to emerge! That was the true inwardness of "Byrnes luck."

Byrnes became an avid collector, a connoisseur, of persons and places.

Houses so obscure in their lineaments that they would be ignored by the casual observer came to have a wonderful fascination for him. Domiciles, like their tenants, must be circumspect in their demeanor, else they would come under surveillance. A blind drawn too tight—or not at all; a door that opened too often—or too seldom; a light that burned at odd

hours—or was dark when it should shine—these things were the trifles by which a card index, called "XYZ" for short, filled itself. The city is divided into four thousand watches, over which a fresh guard is mounted every four hours. A row of identical brownstones soon ceases to be an identical row when subjected to tireless scrutiny night after night; it breaks up into groups, then into individuals, each with its habits and concerns. Eyes are forever watching, trying to divine what is going on within—much as your physiognomist studies the human features, trying to piece out mental processes.

Every little while Byrnes stuffed a handful of cards from the XYZ cabinet into an ulster pocket and started forth to prowl—watching, waiting, and wondering why the thing was holding off, here or there, where the invisible feelers seemed so potent to draw the impending bolt. Also, he kept an eye in the back of his head to catch other persons, unofficial persons, who also would be watching and waiting and wondering.

The house in Sixty-fourth Street had been a prospect for a long time, had a card to itself, with cross references and footnotes. But nothing ever seemed to happen. In the course of his periodic weeding out, the deputy had more than once been inclined to drop the card in the wastebasket, as a defunct mouse hole. Instead, however, he had always dropped it back in its place, and every little while he found it, quite by accident, in the handful in his ulster pocket. This was the case one cold, blustery afternoon in January. The sharp wind was swirling the thin snow about, so that the tall deputy buried his head up to his ears in the high collar of his greatcoat. From force of habit he modified his stride as he approached the house, and took stock of the exterior of the place out of the tail of his eye. The vestibule doors at the top of the carefully scoured steps stood open—as usual. The light of the entresol shone through the écru lace of the crystal-guarded grille—as usual. And against this lace was reflected the silhouette of a flunky standing ready and waiting to open the door at the first sound of a step outside—as usual. That was the point. The trifling eccentricity of this house, which had won it a place in the card index called XYZ for short, was this flunky, always standing ready and waiting inside, to open a door—which was never opened!

"I don't see how they can resist," said Byrnes mentally, as he plowed past, head bent to the weather. But "they" had been resisting—whatever there was to resist—for a matter of several years now.

An express wagon was backing up to the curb, and two men got down and lifted out a box that must have been very heavy, for it taxed their strength. It was iron-strapped, and bore foreign labels, among them being a consular certification. This was quite in keeping with the observed routine of the house—which "they" had been resisting for so long. Iron-strapped boxes bearing consular certification permitting them to enter the port of New York without further examination and appraisal had long since established the habit of entering this house by the basement gate at irregular intervals.

At the corner, Byrnes turned on his heel and retraced his steps. The street was all but empty because of the cold and the biting wind. One foot passenger only was in sight, and he was coming on sideways to the gale. There was nothing especially noteworthy about him, except that he stopped abruptly in front of the house and began searching his pocket for something. It was a paper of matches, which he presently found, and he began making futile attempts to strike and hold a light.

Finally, exasperated at repeated failures, he stepped down into the areaway where the two expressmen were balancing the box on their knees and waiting for an answer to their ring. In the lee of the stoop, the wayfarer made fresh endeavor to strike a light, a proceeding in which he was finally successful, for clouds of smoke emerged from between his cupped hands.

"Cuttinghame?" inquired one expressman as the basement door opened and a servant peered out through the gate. On receiving an affirmative answer, the men shouldered their way in with their heavy burden. The smoker now started on again. His ear, showing above the upturned collar of his heavy coat, fell in the third category of the Vedrines system of classification—that is, it possessed a well-defined tip, and almost no lobe at all, suggesting a mixed ancestry in an extremely remote age.

Byrnes returned to his office—to his filing cabinet—to enter the run of data caught in this afternoon's prowl. After all, the business of being a successful policeman is mostly being a consummate filing clerk, keeping every card, in a system embracing thousands of classifications, up to the minute. He wore an absorbed look as he opened a drawer devoted to the eccentricities of the human ear, and with infinite patience sought out a card. The marginal notes and cross references on this card started him on a paper chase that led him through fifty cabinets before he was satisfied. Then he turned to his stenographer.

"Who's watching the Havana boats?" he asked, out of a clear sky.

"Childers, sir."

"Notify the inspector that his eyesight seems to be affected; have him transferred to Staten Island—a little country air may brace him up."

Byrnes' communications were short and sharp. He dictated an order on a livery company, to provide the eighteenth precinct patrol barn with two taxicabs, also four regular chauffeur's uniforms. The commander of the twenty-fourth precinct was instructed to requisition headquarters for eighteen additional patrolmen, and to keep the third watch on reserve during the fourth watch until further notice. An obscure patrolman in the outskirts was made the object of surprise and delight in a memorandum which brought him downtown and put him in plain clothes; and another, for no more apparent reason, was detached from soft comfort and dropped into bleak oblivion. So on through the better part of an hour. Byrnes loved nothing so much as being a policeman, and his men loved nothing so much as being policemen under him.

The deputy leaned back in his chair and gazed for a long time at the ceiling.

"I don't know if I myself can resist it!" he mused, referring again to the correlated facts in the case of the mouse hole in East Sixty-fourth Street. Here was a house in itself tremendously respectable. It stood well within that fringe of hyper-gentility which clings, in spite of the ever-changing aspect of the surrounding city, to the east side of the park. According to the records, it was the property of Alonzo Griffin. According to the Blue Book, it was tenanted by Alonzo Griffin. According to common knowledge, this same Alonzo Griffin had not set foot in his native land in ten years. He was an acerbic expatriate who had long since renounced everything that concerned America, save the income from ground rents, with which it provided him; an income sufficient to enable him to maintain several Mediterranean villas and a steam yacht—also to enable him to pursue with characteristic vigor and violence his one occupation of collecting ungainly rare specimens of the early

art of printing which fall under the general nomenclature of "incunabula."

A man, no matter how smoothly he rolls through life on rubber-tired wheels, must have some supreme interest in living, no matter how futile. Byrnes knew a man who collected bird cages; another who collected band-boxes; and there was a third who spent eight hours a day trying to persuade the Florida Indians to wear more clothes. These things, however, had nothing to do with the case in point. On the last occasion when old Alonzo had essayed to visit his own country, he had been met at the dock by a group of reporters togged out ceremonially after the manner of boulevard journalists, who sought to interview him as a Distinguished Foreigner—an incident which so dismayed the expatriate that he refused to disembark, but sailed back on the ship that brought him.

Alonzo Griffin did not occupy the house in Sixty-fourth Street. Somebody did. But that somebody never used the front door—in spite of the fact that a flunky always stood there with his hand on the latch. Bright and early each morning, the old major-domo of the establishment—Cuttinghame—started forth on a marketing expedition, preceded by a fat boy carrying a basket. He marketed for some person of meticulous tastes, of exacting digestive apparatus. The old major-domo had been trailed time and again. His journey carried him to the remote Gansevoort Market, on the lower edge of the island, where he challenged acrimoniously the genuineness of each article he purchased, gesticulating, whining, browbeating, crowding his way among the white-smocked dealers at the stalls, with an energy and enthusiasm which suggested that he was catering to some king in exile. Finally, the menu complete, the old man would wend his way homeward. But who ate these so exquisitely chosen viands? Not the servants, of whom there was a houseful. They were amply provided by a German market in Third Avenue, which made a specialty of supply back-stairs fodder in the pretentious households along the park.

Every evening the windows gazed warmly out on the pavement, the light filtering through hangings of silk brocade and lace in a manner that suggested such creature comforts within as consorted with the luxury of this neighborhood. Every morning the mosaic of the vestibule was subjected to a vigorous soap-and-water grueling, as if any footstep ever defiled it.

There was Culver, of course, who might have explained the whole affair in a breath. Culver was a thin, hatchet-faced, glorified edition of an adding machine, who was the manager in America of the mortgages and chattels and the to-have-and-to-hold-till-we-want-them deeds of the Griffin estate, with an office that looked like a jail in the lower Twenties. But Byrnes rejected Culver; it would be impossible to explain plausibly to Culver the theory of mouse holes.

The next morning the deputy cabled abroad to ascertain what the indefatigable "incunabulist" would be doing at a certain hour. The answer came hard on the heels of the query: Alonzo Griffin would be getting married with carefully studied unostentation to an estimable widow—a countess—at that hour. Late that afternoon a studious-looking, long-haired man of dilettante cut mounted the steps of the Sixty-fourth Street house confidently. The door opened before he could touch the bell. The thing could be done, after all. Presenting his card, he asked for an audience with Mr. Griffin.

"I have word of a pre-Gutenberg folio that will interest him," he explained. The caller was led into a waiting room, of which he critically nosed the atmosphere and examined the fur-

nishings to satisfy himself that the place was indeed inhabited. Shortly the flunky returned with word that the master was absent. Would he be in later in the day? Was he expected for dinner?

"The master is expected for dinner," said the flunky, as he bowed the caller out.

"The devil!" said Byrnes to himself as he made down the steps and started off. "If his nibs thinks he can dine on the banks of the Seine and on the banks of the Hudson at one and the same time, he is very much mistaken. At least, not without my standing by!"

An hour later, still another of the big, iron-strapped boxes which had established the habit of entering the basement gate was backed up to the curb and carefully lifted out by two expressmen who staggered under the weight and kept a fearful eye on the "This Side Up" legend. In the box was Deputy Byrnes. He had been unable to resist. The box was addressed to Cuttinghame, as usual, and it bore an ostensible consular certificate from Munich, stating that the contents had been duly examined, appraised, and assessed at the point of origin.

Byrnes was set down with the care of a fragile egg somewhere inside, and he listened patiently through the formula of the crate's reception, with signature, by a person with a tearful voice, evidently Cuttinghame. Shortly they all departed, and when he heard the door close, and the lock click, he carefully braced his back against the top, and unpacked himself. In a moment he was standing outside, and, with the aid of a pocket torch, examining his surroundings. He was in a room piled to the ceiling with boxes similar to that in which he had come. They were all unopened. He ascertained that the door was held by a spring lock on the inside, which simplified the matter of getting out. He opened the door gently and listened. Dinner was evidently in the process of preparation. So much he judged by the clink of silver and glass, the smothered rattle of pottery, and the odors that filled the air. He heard voices. One was the tearful voice which had accepted custody of, and given receipt for, the box he came in. It was quarreling with some other voice over the preparation of an article of food.

"It is most outrageous," said the major-domo, "to affront the master with such truck! I tell you I know his tastes to a nicety, and"—the tearful voice rose high—"I have gone to considerable pains to beat it into your fat head, you muddy-faced, frog-eating——"

Here the continuity of tongues was lost in a rattle of tins and the flop-flop of batter being whipped vigorously in a bowl. A light was struck somewhere down the corridor. The whispers, the stealthy comings and goings, and, most of all, the tantalizing odors that hung on the air were eloquent of the hour of dinner. At a moment when the entire retinue of functionaries necessary to the event assembled in the kitchen, jabbering at a great rate in subdued tones, the deputy commissioner of police seized the occasion to run the gantlet and seek a position of vantage above. He mounted the stairs three steps at a time, and found himself in a butler's pantry quite as elaborate in its paraphernalia as the Waldorf bar. It opened into the dining room which was prepared for the occasion. A huge chandelier of glistening prisms hung over the table; the room extended across the rear of the house, the side giving on the garden being banked with casement windows set in a shallow alcove. On either side of this hung heavy curtains. Byrnes took up his post behind a hanging, and waited. It was a nook which gave promise of security for a long vigil.

Byrnes was beginning an inventory of the amazing trouble some persons go to in the simple act of appeasing hunger when a step on the stairs warned him to lie low. It was old Cuttinghame. The old man paused a moment in the pantry to give a bottle of wine a twirl in its ice; then he entered and tiptoed about the place, examining everything for flaws. His last act was to pick up, one by one, the master's battery of glass, to see that the polish was immaculate. Then he stepped to the wall and pressed a button. The chandelier burst into bloom with a suddenness that caused the deputy to shrink still deeper into his cover. Cuttinghame rolled back the doors in the wall opposite, and thrust aside the hangings with a dexterous gesture. Bowing low to the opposite door jamb, he said:

"Dinner is served, sir!"

There was the zest of a cherished masterpiece in the very inflections of the old man's voice. It carried with it the sly invitation of a waiter, who, about to serve his *pièce de résistance,* lifts the cover just enough to permit a suspicion of fragrance to escape and smite one's nostrils?

Byrnes looked into the drawing-room past Cuttinghame. The room was empty—stark empty; there was not a soul in sight.

"The devil!" ejaculated the astonished deputy to himself.

Cuttinghame moved to the sideboard and took up a station behind the one chair. A second man, quite as pompous, appeared from somewhere and took up a position at his elbow. A clock, lost among the tapestry, gilt, and leather of the room, spoke the hour—seven.

When the hour of eight was intoned from the same indefinable source, Byrnes was aching and stiff in every limb. Nothing had happened in the intervening sixty minutes. The two men had not left their post. Undoubtedly the dinner had gone stale—it was little short of sacrilege. At the last stroke of the hour, old Cuttinghame sighed softly and relaxed. Then, as ceremoniously as the stage had been set for the occasion, it was stripped—everything suggesting meat and drink, and the intricate implements incident thereunto, was whisked out of sight. The doors were closed, the hangings drawn back into place, and the chandelier went to sleep among its myriad facets, which now reflected only gloom.

"The devil!" ejaculated the police deputy again, when he found himself alone and could stretch. And then, after reflection: "The pup should have his neck wrung for him!"

The longer he dwelt on the propriety of this act of violence, the more fitting seemed the impulse. That any man—even an expatriate rotten with riches—should be privileged to effect such an outrage!

To have the board spread for him to the last crumb! Every night! And never sit down! To keep his distance! Three thousand miles of distance! For ten years!

This affair well deserved its fate of coming under the scrutiny of the police!

II.

However, with Cuttinghame it was quite different. Cuttinghame would have been horror-stricken at the mere thought of this affair coming under the scrutiny of the police—horrified not at the audacity of the affair, but at the audacity of the police!

True, each evening at the last stroke of eight o'clock, Cuttinghame emitted a gentle sigh. This sigh had become deep-seated, an item of routine like turning on the lights or polishing the glassware. Cuttinghame had never asked himself why he sighed. Maybe

it was for his master. But one so fortunately circumstanced as Alonzo Griffin, with yachts and villas and acres of cow pasture which had become ground rents through no effort of his own—with steaming, hot dinners waiting for him each evening in odd corners of the earth—certainly he was no object of compassion. It may have been for himself that Cuttinghame sighed. But no again. This dinner, which put perfection itself to the blush, had become waste, scrap, through the simple accident of not being devoured; it was destined to be hauled away in a cart in another few hours, together with parings, skimmings, and sweepings, to be dumped into the sea at the tail end of a garbage scow. But this fact could not dim the glory of its achievement. Is a gem less serene because it resides in the unfathomed caves of ocean? Is a confection less sweet because it does not reach the lips? No—Cuttinghame did not sigh for his dinners. Instead, he kept a sharp eye on his underlings. They would be forever sticking in a finger and drawing out a plum, if he did not hold the whip hand. This repast was designed for the master. And for no one else! Thus did the literal Cuttinghame interpret his orders. Hence, no one else should have it, unless the fishes of the sea.

If the old major-domo had been born with a sense of humor, the time might have come when his enthusiasm would have waned. But that time never came. Cuttinghame was worth his weight in gold. Once set in motion, he would continue to oscillate forever like a pendulum *in vacuo*. He had been imported from England for the express purpose of expecting his master for dinner. Therefore, he expected his master for dinner, and he saw to it that his underlings did likewise.

One morning early in February, Cuttinghame came home with some genuine beluga caviar and a basket of Johannisberger that showed itself feathery when tipped upside down in the light. The very price of the basket would have provided a comfortable annuity for any family residing three avenues to the eastward.

"It will please madame!" he explained, as he exhibited his prizes.

"So?" exclaimed the chef in high rage. "So! There is a mistress now, eh? You will be contriving a *diner des enfants* next!"

The chef had long since given up Cuttinghame as an incurable. A phantom master was enough, was it not, to test one's patience? But to conjure up a mistress out of thin air in the bargain! It was too much!

"See!" cried Cuttinghame, drawing a folded newspaper from his pocket. He tried his best to appear calm, but his finger trembled with excitement as he pointed to the paper. There it was in black and white! Speaking likenesses of the master and the countess, his bride; and airy chatter about the pair of them and their secret nuptials —for a matter of two columns! The chef threw hands and eyes aloft in a spasm of amazement, then fell to stirring his sauces as if his life depended on it. When the major-domo pushed aside the draperies of the drawing-room that evening, he said, as he bowed low to the opposite door jamb:

"Madame is served!"

The next morning, Cuttinghame enlarged the circle of his patronage in the market, seeking titbits to pamper the appetite of the bride. The upstairs regions were subjected to a revolution; there were flaws which a master might pass by—nay, cherish—which must be intolerable to the eyes of a chatelaine. Soon the servants came to curse the day when their master took a wife.

Soon everything was complete. To the last detail, the house had achieved an air of expectation! It was in readiness for the bride.

And then—miracle of miracles—she appeared!

As the limousine drew up to the curb, the irreproachable flunky, with his hand on the doorknob, was momentarily petrified. A tall man muffled in furs was handing out an animated bundle of frills, laces, and curls. They were mounting the steps; the sight was so unwonted that even the policeman opposite stopped and stared.

In a well-bred household the emotions of surprise, amazement, delight are taboo. Nothing seems out of the ordinary—no matter how extraordinary it may be. Repressing his desire to rush to Cuttinghame, the man at the door softly turned the glass knob and swung the portal open, bowing low as he did so, and staring fixedly at the opposite wall. On the heels of the newcomers appeared a man and a maid bearing boxes and wraps. The man was forbidding in appearance, even as continental valets go. The maid had a turned-up nose and a rapid eye and a trim ankle which insisted on winking at one at every step of her birdlike gait.

"So!" Cuttinghame was saying down below, as he tested a new-born confection fresh from the oven. "So! You would poison the household with such stuff as this! One wonders that you have escaped the doors of the penitentiary for so long a time!"

"One day," retorted the chef, "a black *carrosse* will back up to the door and take you away screaming. And a fine thing that will be for a gentleman's house!"

When, a few minutes later, the strange maid slipped down the back stairs, Cuttinghame did not even deign a look. No smallest suggestion of surprise escaped him. The master had been expected. He was here. So! At seven precisely, the big chandelier opened its eyes on the polished surfaces of the great dining room. Cuttinghame drew back the sliding doors, and at his touch the hangings seemed to drop to one side.

"Madame is served!" he breathed in his most succulent tones.

Possibly Cuttinghame's heart, in spite of him, gave a little jump as two stately apparitions brushed past him. If so, he did not evidence it. As he took up his accustomed station, it was several minutes before he could dominate the unseemly thrill of elation that caused his skin to glow and his little eyes to shine. It requires many generations of careful breeding to develop that true patrician caste which permits itself to be served without any outward consciousness of it. Just as it takes many generations of breeding to develop a servitor with the instinct of effacement. In a way, mortals of a lower caste have accomplished something of this result by devising automatic machines from which items of food appear at the impact of a coin in a slot. One may converse on the most intimate topics in the presence of such machines without embarrassment. Such was the case now. In fact, as the dinner wore on, old Cuttinghame came to have the feeling that either he himself and the second man were unreal, non-existent—or that Alonzo Griffin and the countess, his bride, were merely creatures of his imagination.

The countess was a captivating Dresden doll—a laughing, talking doll, with eyes that opened and shut. The master was merely—himself. Cuttinghame had served Alonzo Griffin on one previous occasion at his London establishment. Shortly after, the major-domo had been exported to America. In the ensuing ten years, Alonzo Griffin had not altered in a hair. For all the grace of his thoroughbred lines, there was both intolerance and suspicion in his air. Still, as the courses progressed, Cuttinghame observed that his saturnine manner was melting under the playful

bombardment of his countess. The scene became animated. Old Cuttinghame was fairly hypnotized with delight. If the master, or Madame the Countess, had taken occasion to indicate by any act or word, no matter how slight, their consciousness of the presence of Cuttinghame, or of the perfection of the appointments, the occasion would not have been so happy. But not a syllable, not an encouraging look. The idea seemed to be that it was Alonzo Griffin's foresight and finesse that had caused the complete Cuttinghame to be there—that Cuttinghame had nothing to do with it, could take no credit to himself; he had been merely willed into existence by a superior intelligence.

The bridal pair were conversing volubly in French now—a tongue in which Cuttinghame's interest was purely professional. Once or twice he dreamed that he came within the angle of vision of the master's cold gray eyes. Once he would have sworn that Madame the Countess was honoring him with an appraising scrutiny in the mirror of the sideboard. But these incidents were so transitory as to be more impressions than certainty, and he quickly dismissed the thought.

Finally the feast came to an end, and Madame the Countess withdrew, leaving the master of the house eying malignantly his coffee, his cigar, and his brandy, as though he suspected them, like all things American, of an ulterior motive. After a time he shifted his gaze to Cuttinghame, examining with the most minute attention the major-domo's eyes, nose, mouth, even his warts and wrinkles. Cuttinghame felt his sluggish blood stir, but he returned the look impassively, as befitted his station.

"Cutty," said the master softly, yet with a bite in his tone.

"Please, sir?"

"Call Culver!"

As the man turned away, the misanthrope halted him with a snap of his fingers.

"Cutty!"

"Please, sir?"

The master bored the man with his gimlet eyes.

"Your master and mistress are—in—Nice. Recollect that, Cutty! Both you and Culver! Else you shall have your necks wrung!"

"Quite so, sir," agreed Cuttinghame, and, with this idea fixed firmly in his mind, he went to the telephone. What a rare game it would be to drop this bombshell into the ear of the hated Culver, who knew nothing but rents and deeds and was always quarreling over accounts. Cuttinghame shut himself in the telephone booth in the front corridor and called for the master's man of business. At the sound of the well-known voice, the major-domo said:

"This is Cuttinghame, sir."

"Yes!" came the sharp answer.

"To speak with Mr. Culver, sir."

"Yes."

Cuttinghame flung the bomb:

"Mr. Griffin to speak with you, sir."

"Yes."

That was all there was to it. It was a misfire. Else Culver possessed the bloodless emotions of a turtle. Nevertheless, for all his insulting demeanor, Culver undoubtedly was quaking in his boots at this minute at the other end of the wire. With malicious joy, Cuttinghame adjusted the switch plugs. In the dining room, he set a desk telephone at the master's elbow.

"Mr. Culver, sir," explained the man. The master took up the receiver, eying a corner in the ceiling intently as he did so.

"My—ah—boxes, Culver"—he pronounced it "bauxes"—"they are to be put aboard the *Transylvania* to-night, Culver."

So saying, he gently suspended the receiver on its hook, leaving the no

doubt astounded man of business suspended likewise. The great of this earth—kings, millionaires, and incunabulists, who have dinners hot and steaming in odd corners—are never verbose, repetitive; they pay their underlings to divine their intentions. Cuttinghame chuckled discreetly to himself as he pictured the insolent Culver staring at the insolent telephone. Some minutes later the master bestirred himself, and retired to the upper regions. Still later, a long-distance moving van backed up to the curb, and when the "bauxes," iron-strapped and bearing consular labels, had been closely packed inside, the thing was locked and sealed. It was a fortunate thing that Deputy Byrnes had not selected this night to have himself delivered, for, according to instructions, the van itself, after the custom of such vans, was to be separated from its trucks at the steamship pier and dropped into the hold of the *Transylvania* without being disturbed until wanted on the other side of the ocean. As a receptacle for a stowaway, it was decidedly undesirable.

Cuttinghame watched each of the precious boxes carried from the storeroom and placed in the van. Strange to say, though he had had custody of many of them for years, he had never permitted himself curiosity as to their contents. Orders from the master had been explicit—they were not to be tampered with. As the heavy van moved off, he found himself waited on by the forbidding valet. The man brought word that m'sieu and Madame the Countess would go aboard the *Transylvania* before midnight, as it sailed for Cherbourg at eight in the morning. Would Cuttinghame see that limousines were provided for eleven o'clock? Evidently, Alonzo Griffin and his bride had journeyed to America simply for dinner—and incidentally to collect their boxes. Cuttinghame assented gravely—the limousine would be provided.

At ten o'clock that evening, Warren Culver, man of business for the Griffin estate in America, was summoned to the telephone.

"This is Mr. Culver," he said. "Who is speaking?"

"The police!" said a heavy voice. "You will present yourself in person at the twenty——th precinct police station within the next half hour—or I shall be put to the inconvenience of sending the wagon for you!"

That was all. The party at the other end disconnected. It was quite enough for Culver, however. He was naturally a timorous man. He got into his coat, and, with ten minutes to spare, presented himself as requested. Byrnes, the deputy commissioner of police, accosted him as he entered the station.

"What kind of a joint have you been running in Sixty-fourth Street?" demanded the deputy in crisp tones. "Come, now! Be frank—and I promise things will be much easier for you in the end."

The Griffin man of business stared at his interlocutor, aghast.

"A joint!" he ejaculated. "Do you mean to impugn the respectability of Mr. Griffin's New York residence by referring to it as—as a joint?"

"Well, a fence, if you like that better," replied Byrnes savagely. "It is one and the same thing. Oh, I have had my eye on you for the last five years! I thought for a long time it was only a petty nuisance you were conducting—with your phantom dinners and all that. But now it turns out that you are using the place as a receptacle for stolen goods! Come with me, Culver! This way!"

Culver, feeling his knees weakening under this amazing accusation, meekly followed the tall deputy through the building and into the paved courtyard in the rear. In the middle of the yard stood a large, green moving van of the type called "long distance." On the

pavement beside it were piled fifteen boxes, iron-strapped, and bearing foreign consular labels. At sight of them, Culver cried out in dismay.

"These!" he burst out in a torrent of rage. "These? Oh, you shall smart for this, you blockhead! These are books—priceless books—books collected by Mr. Griffin over a course of years —and stored in his city house until he can provide adequate quarters for them. How do they come to be here? I demand to know, sir. By what warrant have you removed his property from Mr. Griffin's house?"

"They were removed from the house at your order," explained Byrnes dryly. "Cuttinghame telephoned you to that effect—at eight-fifteen o'clock this evening, to be exact."

"What balderdash is this?" Culver was beside himself.

"That is," went on Byrnes, with saturnine enjoyment of the situation, "Cuttinghame thinks he was telephoning you. As a matter of fact, Culver, I will tell you that the telephone wires had been tapped at the junction box in the back yard and connected with a fake switchboard in a vacant house two doors away."

Culver leaped forward, but the deputy waved him back.

"Nevertheless," continued Byrnes, preparing to drop another bomb, "it was Alonzo Griffin himself, at dinner —the first time he has dined here in ten years, Culver, on my word!—it was Griffin himself who instructed Cutty to have you pack up the loot and make off with it. What do you make of that?" he demanded sharply. "By a happy accident," he added confidentially, "one of my men happened to be driving the van in place of the regular driver—so here we are!"

"Mr. Griffin—in New York! Took dinner at his own house to-night? Man," cried Culver, "you are mad! Why, I was in cable communication with him this afternoon—at Nice! I know what I am talking about in this matter, sir!"

"I am afraid you do not," retorted Byrnes. "Now, for instance, you swear to me on your word of honor that these boxes contain books—precious, rare old books—incunabula, I suspect! But look!" Byrnes lifted up the cover of one of the boxes which had been opened. Culver peered in. The sight that met his eyes took his breath away. It was loot—unquestionably loot! It was stuffed to the top with beautifully wrought articles of silver and plate—cutlery, tableware, objects from my lady's boudoir. The yield of a dozen burglarious adventures, to judge by the variety of monograms and coats of arms it bore!

"I will admit," said Byrnes, not heeding the inarticulate gasps emerging from Culver, "that eleven of these boxes contain books—rare, ragged, priceless books, if you like. But here are three of them filled with burglar loot that we have been trying to trace for two years! There is still a fourth —but that's another story. Of course," he added, a grim smile covering his features, "the idea of mixing them up with Mr. Griffin's incunabula, until the coast was clear to make off with them, is a very pretty one. Now, I should like to ask, Mr. Culver, whom do you suspect? The facts are before your eyes. Your Sixty-fourth Street house is a fence!"

At this moment there were heard three sharp blasts of an automobile horn outside. Byrnes pricked up his ears and stood at attention. As if in response to the signal, the big gate at one end of the yard opening on the street suddenly swung ajar. A limousine in the act of passing without warning turned sharply to the left. In an instant it had rolled in and come to rest. No sooner had it done so than the gates were swung to and locked.

The chauffeur alighted, and, with one significant look at Byrnes, opened the door of the car.

"This is the place, sir," he said to his fare.

At the same moment another trio of blasts were heard outside. Again the gates opened; again a limousine in the act of passing swung in at a dangerous speed, and the gates closed on it. The second chauffeur got down and cast a significant look at Byrnes.

The passenger in the first car thrust his head out of the door, looking about him strangely. His eye caught sight of the moving van and the pile of boxes on the pavement. Then he looked up to encounter the gaze of the deputy. For a second he remained fascinated. The next he had shaken off the spell. He turned on his chauffeur with a snarl of rage.

"Idiot!" he cried, with his grand air—for it was none other than Cuttinghame's guest at dinner. "What is this place?"

Warren Culver sprang forward with a cry.

"Ah, Mr. Griffin," he wailed, "there has been some outrageous blunder! You can explain it in a word."

Something in the man's aspect, however, checked Culver, and he stood, staring confusedly.

"What is this place?" repeated Griffin threateningly.

"A police station," said the quiet voice of Byrnes behind him. "A new one—our finest; you haven't been in this one before, have you? But you will become familiar with it before morning."

A woman—none other than the Dresden doll—was peering out at the strange scene with a white face. Madame the Countess had lost something of her imperious manner. In the second car could be seen the maid and the manservant shrinking back in the shadows.

But the street gate had opened again, this time without the accompaniment of an auto horn, and a patrol wagon rolled in.

"Ah," smiled Byrnes, "the party is now complete!" And he whispered in the ear of the still petrified Culver: "Wait till Cutty sees his master!"

Two sullen-faced fellows were the first to emerge from the Black Maria, then a pair of policemen carrying a telephone set and a coil of telephone wire. Finally came old Cuttinghame, wild-eyed and disheveled. At sight of the vision of the Dresden doll at the open door of the first limousine, the old man made a gesture of helpless rage.

"Is Madame the Countess also accused of robbing herself?" he cried. "Is it not enough to humiliate me—a butler of thirty years' standing in the best houses of England, sir? But madame, too, must be questioned—and by an idiotic American constable!"

At this, Madame the Countess threw back her head and burst into a merry peal of laughter, to the amusement of every one. Cuttinghame stood like one stricken. She sprang out of the car and surveyed the group challengingly for a single instant.

"The jig is up, Jim," she said, addressing the pseudo Alonzo Griffin. "Why carry the farce farther? It is more of that damnable Byrnes luck!"

"Yes, the jig is up, Sadie!" said Byrnes sententiously. "This is the first time you have been caught red-handed—oh, those light fingers of yours, Sadie!" He reached out a hand familiarly and took the erstwhile Alonzo Griffin by an ear—an ear which fell in the third category of the Vedrines system of classification. "With that ear, Wilkins—or Rowley—or Alonzo Griffin—or whatever you want to call yourself—you didn't have one chance in a million. I thought we were rid of you for good when we chased you

to Havana last fall. As long as you stayed there you were ace-high with me. But when you came back and turned the Griffin house into a hiding place for the loot you swiped from the rest of the gang, that was something else again. You see, Culver," added Byrnes to the man of business, who was slowly coming to himself, "I am exonerating you, after all. But I have a bone to pick with you at that for maintaining a nuisance. Bring 'em in, men!" he ordered.

The two chauffeurs, who had now taken off their uniforms, and disclosed themselves as policemen, touched the master and the countess on the shoulder and marched them ahead of them. Next came the man and the maid, then the two wire tappers. The bewildered Cutty followed after, as the thieves were lined up at the desk and had their pedigrees taken. Zest was added to the occasion by the last-minute discovery that the bags and boxes in charge of the two bogus body servants were stuffed with such small articles of loot as they had been able to snatch in flight from the furnishings of the Griffin home. Cuttinghame's head sank on his breast. Up to this very moment, his whole life had been attuned to the gospel that there is something about your true aristocrat that carries its own unmistakable atmosphere. It is something subtle, indefinable—but none the less definite. As his two aristocrats were being led away to their cells, the old man heard his name called.

"Please, sir?" said Cuttinghame, through force of long habit.

"You will be in Jefferson Market police court as a witness at eight o'clock in the morning," said Byrnes, eying the major-domo curiously. Cutty stared for a moment, then slowly straightened himself.

"It is impossible, sir; quite impossible," he said in his best major-domo manner. "French artichokes are to be in the market to-morrow morning—and I must be on hand to get the pick of them. The master is very particular, sir!"

"Some day, Cutty," said Byrnes, "a black wagon will back up and carry you away in a strait-jacket." He did not know he was plagiarizing Cutty's old enemy, the French cook. "I am afraid the master will have to dine on canned things to-morrow. You will be in court at eight o'clock in the morning—or else I will send my wagon for you!"

GETTING THE RIGHT DEFINITION

IN the fire department of one of the large Eastern cities, a member of the force has been rewarded for long service and conspicuous gallantry by being made assistant chief of the department. Naturally his job carried with it a secretary, who wrote all of his superior's correspondence.

One morning the secretary painstakingly prepared a document which he adorned with a good many words that ran over three syllables. The assistant chief began to read it. Everything went well until he came to the word "inaccurate." Right there he landed his forefinger and scowled.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"That's something wrong," the secretary explained.

"I know it's wrong," the superior replied snappishly, "but what is it?"

The Intimate Enemy

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Spider's Web," "War, Personally Conducted," Etc.

When the fight begins within himself, a man's worth while. Browning's familiar lines will recur to you while you read this powerful autobiography, which is mainly the story of a man's fight with Alcohol, the intimate enemy that has seared and scarred and slain its tens of millions:

Why comes temptation, but for man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestaled in triumph?

(***In Four Parts—Part One***)

FOREWORD.

THIS is the story of a survivor of a battle that never ends. That battle, ceaselessly raging, is one in which unnumbered millions of men, embracing in their far-flung ranks the flower of the world, have perished miserably; a planet-wide battle in which countless hordes of men, comprising in their battalions the chosen of the races, the elect and the hope of their time and of the time to come, are locked to-day in the encompassment of despair, of doom, of death.

It is a battle upon which the sun never sets. There is no meridian in which the endless din of its strife is not heard. There is no nation that is spared in its pitiless path, that does not feel the flame of its scorching breath.

This stupendous battle, waged without truce or intermission, is the conflict ceaselessly carried on by the conscriptionists of King Alcohol.

From that appalling army there are occasional stragglers. One of these stragglers is the teller of this tale of truth. He is one of the few survivors of a valiant battalion of young men who fought for years on end in that hopeless conflict. By superhuman luck, he won his way out of the embroilment when nearly all of the comrades of his youth lay crippled or dead around him. He himself was seared and scarred. But he limped away from the firing line, and in the end he found the path to the domain of peace and healing.

From that domain he writes of what he himself experienced at the still raging Armageddon of Alcohol. His story of the battle, varying only in details and incidents, is an epitome of all of the stories of all of the men who participate in that everlasting conflict of despair.

CHAPTER I.

This was the forenoon of a fourth of March, long ago. At noon, a famous Congress would expire, dissolving into the blur of impressions called history. The Congress was dying drunkenly. For three days and nights, the capitol at Washington had been swept by the spirit of Saturnalia.

The French Spoliation Claims, immemorial legislative ghost, held the attention of a House of Representatives as notable for the distinction of many of its members as it was for its dissipatedness in the aggregate. The debate, begun with a brilliant clash between clear, keen minds, degenerated into the most memorable of all revels beneath the great white dome, as, indeed, it was destined to be the last of these debauches at the capitol.

Through the three days and nights of the unbroken session, drink-muddled members romped and rioted, swayed and staggered, slept and snored, pranked and pirouetted on the very floor of the House, beneath packed, drink-hilarious galleries. Never before or since were enacted such scenes at the capitol as the House corridors and committee rooms saw on those three nights.

The spirit of revelry, breaking into a flame and blown upon by a roaring wind of recklessness, swooped upon the sedate and the sober, the decorous and the defiant alike of this collectively distinguished House membership. The House restaurant became a honkatonk. Huge silver bowls of fiery punch stood on tables in committee rooms, relays of drunken black messengers ladling out the liquor to all who applied for it, and ever replenishing the supply.

Emissaries of the members brought in, from the Washington streets, hordes of negro boys, musicians, singers, and buck-and-wing dancers; these entertaining black vagabonds, mellowed by free liquor, with their guitars and banjos and mouth organs and rich voices and wild dancing, shuffled gayly through the corridors from one committee room to another, leading staggering, boisterous parades of blear-eyed, alcoholically delirious members, who clumsily buck-danced and shuffled side by side and hand in hand with them.

And the night birds, men and women, from the backwaters of Washington, were there to join in the roistering. Women, some of them beautiful with the baleful beauty of acknowledged abandonment, fluttered and gyrated through wild orgy dances on committee-room tables to which they had been lifted on the shoulders of men whose very names were party assets and political catch phrases. And these men, catching the infection of rhythm from the swaying women on the tables, clownishly footed uncouth rigadoons of their own, until, spent and winded, they plunged in sprawling, disheveled heaps to the floor.

I am setting down this inadequate and necessarily restrained description of a capitol revel of twenty-five years ago because, for me, it marked the beginning of a disquieting, but long-disregarded, awakening. For it was on the last day of that session of Congress that I, a boy of nineteen, was made sharply aware, I think for the first time, that I had come to depend upon drink for what joy—I considered it joy—was to be got out of life.

I was the private secretary of a senator who held a committee chairmanship. On that fourth-of-March forenoon, I did not reach the committee room until nearly eleven o'clock. I should have been there at nine. My desk was heaped high with the senator's urgent end-of-the-session correspondence, most of which called for hard digging and daily tours of the government departments. But for three nights on end I had been participating, with a blithe gang of the younger capitol attachés, in the bacchanalian performances at the House end of the building. That morning, as upon the two previous mornings, I had tumbled into bed at dawn for a few hours' sleep. A boy of nineteen had no right to be the parched, bleared, tremulous apparition that I was when I shambled shak-

ily into the committee room in the Senate wing that forenoon.

My senator was there ahead of me, seated at his desk, ripping open the envelopes of letters. As I walked in, he shot a keen glance, from beneath his bushed white brows, at my hot, mottled young face and drink-inflamed eyes. Then he pursed his old lips of iron.

"'Morning hearts and morning faces,'" he said crisply, quoting a line of Stevenson's that was then new to the world. "You don't look much like that phrase this morning, son," he added, not carpingly, but in his usual kindly tone. For he was a kind man and a great gentleman—one of the really distinguished statesmen-senators of that period. He was old, finely bred, scholarly, cultivated, famous, innately kind. Many notable people, men and women, prized his words. But I was that most irreverent and self-satisfied of partly sentient beings, a boy. A boy prizes nothing save himself, his own headstrong impulses, his own pitifully immature outlook upon life.

I made no reply to his remark. I had barely heard it. I was busy at the iced-water cooler, for my throat and midriff seemed ablaze. I put my overcoat and hat away and sat down at my desk.

"Come over here, son!" the senator called to me, in his subdued, old-man's voice, from his desk by the window looking out upon the fresh spring grass and early-flowering shrubs of the west terrace. "Let the work lie for a little while. There are a few words I want to say to you. I believe you'll be willing to give ear to them this morning."

Would I? How queerly mistaken the fine old man was about that! How could it be otherwise? He was half a century older than I. His own age of adolescence was fifty years hull down. How could he, at seventy, be supposed to remember the scornful, rebellious mood of a boy who is offered even the very best of well-meant advice?

"The old scout is going to dress me down," I remember saying drearily to myself as I plumped into the chair alongside his huge mahogany desk. "I hope, with this devilish head of mine, he cuts it short."

"You're a bit shaky," said the senator, noticing how my hands trembled and my fingers flickered on the arms of my chair. "Have you had anything, since awakening, to pull you together? Or any breakfast?"

I had taken two drinks of whisky and a cup of strong, black coffee immediately upon getting out of bed. But I lied tranquilly to him. No, I had taken nothing since before I had gone to bed.

"Better have something, then, son," suggested the kind old man, nodding in the direction of his private cabinet, as I knew he would when I lied to him. The senator did not drink, but he kept this cabinet in his committee room stocked with liquors for constituents and fellow senators who dropped in upon him. I crossed to the cabinet, got out a bottle of rare old cognac, and poured out and tossed off a Gargantuan drink, while the senator, with the courtesy of another era, which interdicted spying, in any circumstances, upon the size of the drink taken by another man, gazed out of the window. Then I resumed the chair by his desk, feeling better. It had been rather decent of the good old scout to offer me that pick-me-up, I reflected. But, all the same, I hoped he would cut his "lecture" short!

"You've been using liquor right smart lately, haven't you?" he asked me, not in any inquisitorial tone, but in a sort of confidential, matter-of-fact, man-to-man way that his friends liked. "Right smart" was a colloquialism of his section of the country. He had many such,

and they added pungency to his cultivated speech.

I tried not to look hangdog—not very successfully, I imagine—while I mumbled something meant to be parrying.

"I don't want you to suppose that I am preaching at you or putting you on the carpet, my son," he went on, brushing at his snow-white mane with his hand and smiling at me in his winning old way. "But I believe I've been noticing, almost since this session began, that there were times when you were —well, a little away from yourself." He paused, gazed out of the window for a space, then went on: "It has always been my opinion that a man has no right to volunteer advice to anybody about anything as to which he has no firsthand knowledge or experience. But it so happens that I know a good deal about whisky and the mental, moral, and physical effect of whisky upon men. I drank enough of it in my younger day. And I am an old enough man now to know that it was only by the very especial grace of God A'mighty that whisky did not carry me down to the gutter that I was headed for when the Civil War broke out."

Here was a bit of intimate revelation. This sturdy, distinguished old man had been a senator of the United States, in Washington, for more than twenty years. During all of that time, it was a matter well known to his friends that he had never taken a drink of liquor. I had not known that he ever had used liquor. I think I may take this much of credit to myself, that I sensed the simple, unaffected condescension of his revelation, the effort it must have cost a man of his reserved, old-fashioned dignity to make it, and the immense confidence he was reposing in me, his cub secretary, and a dissolute one at that, in telling me such things. This was no conventional "lecture" I had enough sense to discern.

"I may say to you, too," he went on, in his subdued way of speaking, "that not alone in my own person have I felt the scourge of whisky. My father died of it very soon after I was born. But that was not the worst of it. One of my own boys—my first boy—destroyed himself with whisky. Whisky killed him. He was a promising boy; pretty tol'able young, too; not much older than you are now, I reckon."

He gazed out of the window, looking pretty bleak, when he told me these things.

"I don't like to think," he went on, "that I was in any way responsible for that boy going the way he did. But we can't dodge the facts of life. I was drinking hard before and after he came into the world. The appetite for whisky was born in him. And so it was my fault that the boy really never had a fair chance from the day he was born. I know that. I can't blink it. I've often wished that I could."

I am glad to remember now that, as I listened to the fine old man, I felt my mind and heart warming with love and honor for him. And I found myself ashamed of my anticipations of a little while before, of the "dressing down" I was going to receive.

"As for myself," he continued, "I stopped using whisky only when I had to. I was a slave to it. It had so beaten down my will that I could not resist it. But the Civil War broke out. I entered, as you know, the Confederate service. I was glad to get where the fighting was, for I knew that I was a drunkard, and I knew, too, that death was far preferable to that. I tried hard to get whisky after I entered the army. But I could not get it. There was none to be had. After the first year or so, I did not try. My slavery was over. It takes about two years for all of the whisky to work its way out of a man who has become addicted to it. I was in the army four years—until the war ended. It was good to go back home,

son, knowing that I was forever through with whisky."

He did not say that, from a captain, he was a major general, and with Lee at Appomattox, when the war closed. But I knew it, as all the world knew it. All the world did not know, though, I caught myself reflecting, with a lump in my throat, that he had gone into the army with the hope of being released by death from the thralldom of drunkenness.

"I've lived long enough to know that no man, young or old, will consent to profit by any other man's experience, no matter how closely that experience may approximate the facts of his own case," he went on, rising, and, as he stood over me, dropping a hand upon my shoulder. "But, son, I'm asking you, anyhow, to give the stuff up once and forever. You are young enough to do it. It hasn't got you clutched yet. It may have a little hold on you. But that is very different from being hopelessly gripped by it. And that is precisely what whisky does to every man who stays with it long enough—it grips him just hopelessly. It is stronger than all will and character. There is no joy in life, there is nothing but leaden despair, for the man who falls into that condition. He is poisoned, and all the world looks poisoned to him."

He ceased suddenly, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, gazed ruefully at the immense pile of correspondence on my desk, and puffed out his cheeks. "What an unholy stack of rubbish to plow through!" he broke out, in a completely altered tone. "Let's get at it, son."

The "lecture," so different from what I had prefigured, was over. It was like him to have closed without asking me to make him any sort of a promise. He was too big a man to exact a promise. But, all the same, when he had ceased, his quiet words, the amazing confidences he had reposed in me as to his own early life, had planted the seed of fear in me. The seed of fear; yes, just that—for the hour. But the soil of youth is shallow.

We attacked the clutter of correspondence. After an hour or so, I went to a committee room on another floor to get some papers bearing upon an appointment from the senator's colleague. I had to search the Senate wing before I found this gentleman in a masseur's hands in the Senate baths. I had been absent perhaps twenty minutes when I returned to the committee room.

The bell announcing that a vote was about to be taken in the Senate was ringing loudly in the committee room when I reëntered. The senator, who was settled deeply in the big swivel chair before his desk, with his head dropped slightly forward and his eyes closed, obviously had not heard the clanging bell. I had known him occasionally to nap in his desk chair—but not so profoundly as this. A queer sort of icy chill ran through me as I sprang across the room to arouse him, for it was a bill which he himself had framed that was about to be voted on. He did not move as, purposely making a lot of bustle in my progress, I approached him. As I stood over him, I noticed that his posture in the chair was an oddly huddled one. I did not seize his coat lapel to shake him awake, as I might have done had not that chill continued to run through my spine. Instead, I rested my palm upon his forehead. It was very cold. I raced in a panic to the floor of the Senate, and brought back to the committee room a senator from New England who was a medical man.

"I feared a second attack would finish him," said this medical senator, after a quick examination. "Has he been wrought up over anything to-day? I warned him against all forms of excitement when he had his first attack,

some months ago. He died of heart disease about a quarter of an hour ago."

CHAPTER II.

I knew all too well why he had been wrought up. I knew that his talk addressed to me, tranquil though it had seemed, had come to the surface from bitter, long-masked pools of sorrow and regret. The backflow of old and poignant memories had brought about an inner excitement which, though all outward manifestation of it had been bravely repressed, had overstirred his weakened, timeworn heart and hastened his death. Of course I kept that knowledge to myself. It was long before I could shake off the conviction that I had slain him by brute violence, by the very work of my hands. I carried that morbid thought with me when, with the cortège committee of senators, I accompanied his body to the Southern seaport, his home city, where he was buried.

And the obsession, instead of sobering me, served only to make me the more reckless. There was a deal of drinking on that special car which conveyed the legislative party to the Southern city. I did my share.

I was used to drink. Already, at the age of nineteen, I had traveled a long way on that road. I seemed always to have been surrounded by drink, to have been destined from the very beginning of my early boyhood cognizance of the world around me to learn through eyes and appetite all that was to be discovered about drink. This reflection came to me without any suggestion of warning, and leaving me devoid of any intent to curb indulgence as the train sped on its way to the Southern seaport city. I remember that, in reviewing on the train my progress along the path which the dead senator had pictured so darkly, I experienced a silly glow of boyish self-gratulation at the thought that, trained and adept drinker that I had been for a long time, I had been clever enough to side-step any actual danger from the thing, had got so far along the lane of success that I could easily afford to continue to ignore that danger! For had I not been walking literally with arms linked to that peril since my very childhood? On that train, I could coolly review my earliest step and all of the later ones along the path which it seemed entirely natural for my feet to tread, and still take no alarm over what dark trouble might lurk along the rest of it yet to be traversed!

The early pictures were reassembled in my mind with a singular distinctness of outline as the train plunged on. For example, my very first dip in the maelstrom of alcohol—what an inexplicable impulse that had been for a ten-year-old boy, and how acutely I remembered it!

I was an altar boy. The cathedral was in a rough Missouri River city of what was then a frontier State. Because of a certain precocity, and perhaps of a calculating method of dominion over the raffish lot of boys in the sacristy, most of whom were much older than I, I was acolyte in chief, the servitor on the right side of the altar. I was chunky and keen for my age, chubby-cheeked and steady of eye in contact with the priests—aye, a cool hand even in the presence of the bishop himself!—and I wore cassock and stiffly starched, lace-bordered surplice with an air! So the men of God encouraged me, amusedly permitted me to rocket forward from the inert mass of supernumerary altar boys until I attained the right-hand side of the altar, with all of the flourishing activities of that acolyte.

So, as acolyte, it fell to me to pour the sacred wine into the chalice held in the two hands of the celebrant of the mass. To this hour, I recall, with a sort of swirling in the head, how the fra-

grance of that wine, rising from the chalice to my nostrils as I poured it from the cruet, wrought upon my boyish mind, exhilarated me, started my mouth to watering in a very ecstasy of desire.

There was, of course, a vast, grisly amount of alcoholic history back of my entrance upon the world. No doubt I had what protagonists of the hereditary theory call "a predisposition for alcohol."

Be that as it may, I wanted some of that wine—not merely to smell it, but to drink it!

The day came when I was to have it. Watching my opportunity with palpitating heart, I plucked a pint bottle of it from the closet itself, untied surplice strings, and thrust it under my jacket. I sped to the altar boys' vestment-disrobing room and fairly leaped out of surplice and cassock. Then, at a dead run, I shot out of the sacristy, knowing not at what instant I should feel the hot claws of Beelzebub encircle my neck to pull me down, down, down to the sulphurous maws of everlasting torment. But never for an instant did it occur to me to retrace my guilty steps and replace the bottle in its closet. I would know if the taste of wine accorded with its glorious fragrance, whatever of endless stark suffering might betide through eternity!

Breathless, I reached the stable of my home, only a few squares from the cathedral. In that stable was a vicious devil of an ex-cavalry horse. Only my father rode the brute. There was a standing injunction that I should never even go near the animal, which had been condemned out of the cavalry for mangling soldiers with his teeth. But often I had snaked the beast out of the stable and ridden him at a dead, pounding gallop for many miles, bareback, with only a halter to guide him—for saddle and bridle were locked away. The soldier-mangling brute had always been as kind to me as a docile dog. I led him out of the stable now, mounted him by twining my hands in his mane and literally walking up his leg—this horse that had tried to murder men for currycombing him!—and was off over the roads of the government reservation at a thumping canter.

The cool, rushing wind on my face drove the pursuing fiend far to the rear of me. I had my nerve back—and the bottle of magic wine joggling pleasantly against my skin beneath my jacket.

Five miles away, I guided the horse from the road into the deep woods, heading him for a grassy clearing, walled in by hazel and sumac bushes, atop of a bluff overlooking the swiftly flowing, turbid Missouri River. I had chosen the spot with deliberation for its immense, weird solitude. I wanted to be utterly alone.

So, getting the cork out of the bottle with a penknife, I first took a great inhalation of the wine's fragrance through my nostrils, then placed the bottle to my lips and took a deep, cool, gurgling draft of it.

The taste was incredibly satisfying, in amazing correspondence with the fragrance! I waited. There was a warm, pleasant glow at the pit of my stomach. There was an agreeable tingling in my fingers. The May green of the trees was very beautiful. The dun-hued sand bars of the great river took on the hue of gold. I heard a fanfare of trumpets from the distant garrison, and thrilled martially to the splendid sound. I took another deep, deep drink from the bottle. After a little while, the great mass of billowy, golden clouds swimming lazily over the blue sky seemed to bend very close to me. I was exalted, but a little sleepy; and I was most astonishingly comfortable, drowsily conscious of the intensest sensation of well-being.

The afternoon shadows were long athwart the clearing when I awoke.

The devil horse browsed placidly near me. The bottle lay empty beside me. I slaked my hot thirst at a near-by spring that I knew. But I had no headache, no physical discomfort. I was merely a little sad, a little pensive as I rode the horse home. I got the brute into the stable before his absence had been discovered. And nobody ever knew anything about what I had done.

That was my first obeisance before the throne of King Alcohol—and I was ten years old!

When I was eleven, I went to work. As message-delivering boy for a telegraph office, in a border town reeking and riotous with drink, I began to garner alcoholic experience. Day after day my work thrust me into contact with hard-drinking men—and women.

It was a drunken period in this country, everywhere; but in frontier places such as this one, it was an amazingly besotted epoch. The streets were preempted by drunken men, staggering along or utterly prone; their Indian yells and cowboy "yip-yipees!" were ever cleaving the air day and night. Ceaselessly, through this town, long trains of prairie schooners, with the "Pike's Peak or Bust!" and "Git Thar, Eli!" slogans daubed on their canvas sides, rumbled heavily westward, their whisky-wild drivers howling like medicine-making Moquis as they went through. The six and eight-mule teams of the long-haul wagon freighters, whose routes lay through country not traversed by railroads, celebrated their return from long trips by massive and frequently murderous drunks.

Celebrated outlaws, knowing the town to be filled with their partisans and sympathizers, came there for weeks of riotousness. Jesse James himself occasionally was a visitor—not, however, to drink, for this implacable brute was abstemious, but to forgather with his friends; and once I cast eyes upon him for an instant, knowing in my deepmost heart that he was the greatest hero the sun had ever shone upon.

Several thousand Nez Percé Indians, rounded up by the United States army after a long, hard-fighting campaign, were encamped under a heavy guard of soldiers back of the near-by fort. Each month the soldiers swooped upon the town for their mammoth pay-day drunk. Most of the business men to whom I delivered telegrams made it the unbroken rule of their lives to become chipperly, boisterous, or comatosely drunk by mid-afternoon, at which time I never thought of going to their places of business with messages, but went, quite as a matter of course, to the saloons they patronized; and I came to know their drinking routes so infallibly that I never failed to find them. Virtually every other building downtown was a flashy groggery or a honkatonk where the uncouth, baboonish dancing never ceased, day or night. And the red-light district, to which my messenger work took me many times a day, flourished and spread like a brush fire.

Here was an atmosphere, a field of work for a boy who instinctively lionized all violators of the social order! And nearly every boy does that. A boy is your natural social rebel. Workaday, convention-obeying people are dismal, mean-spirited folk to his view. Owing in part to the very restraints necessarily imposed upon him by his elders, his impulses are not toward mere liberty alone, but downright license. He may—he generally does—successfully mask this attitude toward the existing order. But secretly, in the inner anarch breast of him, he is indurately opposed to all settled rules of conduct, and his contempt for those who live by those rules is boundless. Loose living looks like noble, splendidly defiant largeness of living to him. And he extols the finger snappers at society in his heart of hearts.

And so, far from being repellent, this

atmosphere of rough dissipation in which my work placed me seemed just about the right thing. It was "life"! It was a meritorious method adopted by its pursuers for escaping from the humdrum of commonplace existence. There was something dashing, reckless, daring, denoted by the drink flush on a man's face. He was no craven capitulant to custom. The lily-livered, little-hearted, paltry-spirited men who were "afraid" to drink—the contempt I felt for these was so keen that I scarce could forbear showing it.

Thus the boy view. And so the passion for emulation stirred within me. I, too, when my time came, would be one of that superb, opinion-free, custom-scorning crew!

A smiling, ruggedly comely, uninquisitive-seeming, tolerant-eyed youngster, devoid of smart Alec propensities, I was made much of at a good many queer places where I delivered telegrams. Intoxicated men would wheedle me—and it took very little of that!—into sitting with them at saloon tables after I had delivered my messages.

"Have a little shot for yourself, bub?" they would ask me, with mock gravity. When I would nod affirmatively, they would laugh delightedly and slap their knees. "What's your pizen? A gargle o' the old stuff, or beer?"

"Beer, I reckon. I'm busy to-day, and I've got to keep straight." This from me, delivered with a sort of confidential solemnity. Of course it always evoked uproarious laughter. But I did not mind that. I was "sitting in" with grown men at their revels.

If there was any law then against the serving of drink to minors—and I doubt if there was—it was a dead letter. Moreover, I was a husky lad for my years, and always looked a good deal older than my age.

So the beer would be served. I quickly picked up the brave trick of blowing the foam off the top of the glass with a flourish. How the flushed men would laugh when I did that!

"Well, say, now, hain't that codger a hot card? Hain't the dad-binged little son of a coyote a warm party?" they would break out.

And I would toss off the drink with the savoir-faire of a toper, and go out into the street with an agreeable, swirling sense of magnification. Sometimes this would happen many times a day. There were days on end when I would go about wrapped by what I found to be an agreeable alcoholic haze—the state of intoxication that I came later in life to know as a "still." I found it all very pleasant. Life swam in rose. It was just as it should be. I was progressing. I was hand in glove with "men," in cahoots with "life."

At the end of a year of that sort of life, when I was twelve years old, I was a fairly proficient drinker! Of course, in so short a space of time, no actual addiction to alcohol, no real physical need for the stuff, had been set up in me. But I had learned to like it. I wanted it. In fact, I leaned upon it. It "dispelled the grayness"—of course I did not then know that imbecile phrase, but I felt it.

Then suddenly I had a great rise in life. I went to Washington!

In our town lived, between sessions of Congress, a famous senator of the United States—that senator whose ironic observation, "The purification of politics is an iridescent dream," was to become a classic dear to the souls of political cynics. I delivered telegrams to him at his home in our town. After a time, he began to notice and question me.

Yes, I was working because my people were far from well to do. No, I did not mind the work—I liked it. Had I given any thought to the subject of an education? I had, indeed! I had not the least intention of going through life a lowbrow. How, then, did I pur-

pose obtaining an education? Well, I was going to get better jobs right along, until I could pay for an education.

The great senator—who, a little later, was to lose his seat in the upper House and to refer sardonically and memorably to himself as "a statesman out of a job"—smiled and cogitated. He could obtain for me an appointment as page in the capitol at Washington; not in the Senate, for there were no vacancies in the Senate staff of pages, but in the House of Representatives; the speaker of the House was his friend, and would arrange the appointment for him. Would I care to be a page in the capitol at Washington?

When the senator left for Washington, a month later, I went with him. On the day after we reached Washington, I was sworn in as a page of the national House of Representatives, at a man's salary. I found an agreeable boarding house where half a dozen of my fellow pages, miraculously sophisticated brats, lived. I was "on my own," a detached individual, a separate entity in a blossomy world.

My translation from the genuinely wild and woolly West of that time to the capital of the United States seemed a lucky bolt out of the blue, an incredible thrust forward. It was as if some captain of the imperial legions, coming upon a likely-seeming boy in distant Thrace or Gaul, had in a fanciful moment picked the boy up and carried him off to glowing Rome in the reign of Augustus—or, better, in the reign of Nero; for, in the matter of revelry, those were Neroesque days in Washington!

It took me no time at all to discern that Washington was the life. The representatives indulged and pampered me. I was a big-eyed youngster, with the habit, neither brazen nor calculating, of looking my elders smack dab in the eye when they spoke to me. I was a wholesome-looking, well-padded, shoulder-squaring, corn-fed kid from the Corn Belt of the great West. Prairie winds had pricked the red into my cheeks. I had learned how to make the best of a boy's clothes with money earned by myself. Contact with men had mitigated, perhaps entirely eliminated, whatever of the raw "freshness" of the boy I had possessed before going to work. I had the somewhat unusual knack, for a boy, of doing what I was told to do and doing it quick.

So the page's job in the House of Representatives was a made-to-order, fitted-to-measure job for me; I could and did perform my tasks *con amore;* a page's life was my dish! The butt at first of my fellow pages because I was from "a rube State," I quickly sailed past them as if they had been anchored. At the close of my first session, I was second page in chief, complaisantly bullyragging "my underpages" all over the place. I "stood in" with the speaker, a renowned man from Maine by the name of Tom Reed. Nor did I become cerebrally swollen. I took it all as a matter of course.

Naturally imaginative, my boyish mind quickly exfoliated amid these stately surroundings. The classic, Hellenic splendor of the beautiful city enraptured me. And most of my waking hours were spent in the very hub and focus of it all, the capitol of the capital.

But the drinking was there. It seemed to be ordained that my world should be hemmed by drink. The House and Senate cafés, later to be banished from the capitol, were thronged always with flushed legislators. Few committee rooms lacked their cabinets of liquors. It fell to the pages to see noted men most exaltedly drunk, the outside world never guessing. These were, of course, not of the type of men who would think of asking, or even permitting, a boy to drink in their company. But the boy, emulative, hanker-

ing for "manhood," and perceiving that here, as back home, the use of liquor appeared to be prerequisite to the attainment of that estate, could find ways of getting drink, and did.

An assistant librarian of Congress took an interest in me. I had the fundamental "three R's." I had learned my A B C's at the age of three, and at five had gone to school. So there were six years of schooling before I went to work as a telegraph messenger. I had been an omnivorous reader from childhood of every book I could beg, borrow, or—well, otherwise acquire.

The assistant librarian, a man rarely and unselfishly kind, found me decently well grounded. He mapped out a long, stiff course of reading for me, furnished the books, quizzed and tutored me. I burned the boarding-house midnight gas over the course, earning much nagging from the landlady therefor. When I was fourteen, I took up, in addition, the study of shorthand. One of the official reporters of the House of Representatives, a great expert, taught me. I was apt at it. I wheedled, bullied, and finally paid relays of my fellow pages to dictate to me hours on end, and night hours at that, when I reached the dictation-taking stage. At sixteen, I was so expert a stenographer that I could report the most frenzied proceedings of the House of Representatives—a test! I had gone through with the stiff course of reading, which my friend the assistant librarian assured me was equivalent, to all intents and purposes, to the academic course at any university.

At sixteen, I looked twenty. I was strutting Pennsylvania Avenue in a frock coat—with, in the autumn, a yellow chrysanthemum of the size of a saucer in the lapel buttonhole—a silk hat, and flourishing a cane! I could swagger into the barber shop of a barber who had cut the hair of presidents of the United States and ask him to give me a close shave—"a couple of days under the skin, George, for I'm going out to-night." I could lounge into Chamberlin's or Shoomaker's and line up at the bar with the intellectually elect and alcoholically doomed of the land and pour out my three fingers of "the hard stuff," and many replicas of "the same" on end, and drink with the desired bored, world-weary air.

I was, not to put too fine a point upon it, a most egregious ass of a boy who had had a great deal of luck and a great deal of help from kind people.

Then, at sixteen, I could resign my pageship. The president appointed a commission to investigate certain railroads. I went with the commission, at a big salary and big expense money, as official stenographer. It was a special-car junket, a joyous trip of vintages from coast to coast. I took and transcribed hundreds of thousands of words of testimony all the way from Boston to San Francisco—often with the throbbing head of the special-car junketer; but I did the work and did it well.

So well, indeed, that when a congressional commission went to London to confer with representatives of the British government as to the fur-seal poaching game among the Aleutian Islands, I was taken along as official reporter. It was another blithe, moist expedition. There was little for me to do. I could, with official sanction, detach myself for a few weeks from the party and investigate, in Rome, the merits of old Chianti, in Budapest the tang of tawny Tokay, in Paris the spiritual significance of absinth artistically dripped.

Returning, then, to Washington, I became the secretary of the old senator from the South whose body was in the baggage car of the train on which I rode while this brooding review of it all passed through my mind. I had been with him a little more than two years. I was now in my twentieth year, and somehow there had been set up in

me a need—not merely the desire alone, but a need—for liquor. I did not know then why this should be. I only knew that it was a fact. I must drink, or life would be a very slaty-gray affair. The thought of going through life without drink was inconceivable.

The old senator's earnest adjuration frequently came to my mind during the trip South. It had been noble of the splendid old chap to talk to me in that way. I appreciated it.

But his words did not apply to my case. Other men might go down under whisky. He himself might have surrendered to its power in his younger day. But I—*I* could beat it! Not only could, but of course would!

The soil of youth is shallow; and the seed of fear, implanted in me for a little while by the old senator's words, already was washed away on a flood of drink of my own pouring.

CHAPTER III.

The senator was buried. With the funeral party from Washington, I stood beside the open grave, cloven to the heart by what I knew, and nobody else, of the circumstances of his dying. I feel fairly sure now, of course, that his talk with me had had little or no effect in hastening his death. He was old, he had an organic heart trouble, it had been written for long that he should go at any time, even in a placid moment or in sleep. But it suited my morbid purpose then to permit raw conscience to scourge me with the conviction that I was largely answerable for his sudden passing. Youth loves the shadow, however much it may abhor the substance, of an exalted guilt. Moreover, this guilt was my excellent excuse for a corroding melancholy. What to do—inquires youth that drinks—with a corroding melancholy? What else, except "drown" it? Thus I, blindly poised over an abyss of self-wrought misery.

And so, for the first time in my life, I quite lost myself. I detached myself from the funeral party. They were returning to Washington on the special car. I told them that, for the change and the sea air, I preferred to return by steamer, by way of New York. This was true. I purchased my passage on the day of the funeral for the steamer that was to leave on the following day. I saw the Washington-returning party off at their train. Then I returned to the hotel.

There ensued a group of days that, so far as any consciousness of them was concerned, were utterly lost out of my reckoning. I had never before been entirely out of myself. I had often been intoxicated. But I never had been unqualifiedly, hopelessly, paralyzedly, horrendously drunk. Never before, since my emergence from the dream called childhood, had there been one moment in my life that I could not account for—hazily, perhaps, at times, and without any array of confirmatory details, but account for, nevertheless. And here were four straightaway days plucked squarely and completely out of the record of my existence on earth!

The hiatus in memory had its beginning a few hours after my return to the hotel after seeing the returning funeral party off at the train. At the hotel bar, I met a man I knew. He had been a Washington correspondent, and was now a United States post-office inspector. He was leaving for the North at once, he told me. We had some drinks. I had been drinking pretty steadily for a week—since the beginning of the festivities on the House side of the capitol preceding the close of the session. And I had been scarcely eating at all. So, no doubt, I was in a measure slated for what happened.

But the extraordinary prolongation of that absolutely unremembered blank period—the four days on end com-

pletely torn out of the book of my life —there was a baffling and a grisly thing to think upon when I came to myself!

Not nearly so hideous a thing to think upon, though, as the condition in which I found myself when I emerged from the blankness to a consciousness of my state and my surroundings.

With a body in physical torment, every organ and member racked and aching, I came back from obliteration. I was stretched out on some barrels. It was between decks of a steamer—I could see, peering out of poisoned eyes through an open deadlight, that the steamer was moving. It was a filthy compartment, up in the eyes of the steamer, two decks below the main one —a compartment partly for steerage voyagers and partly for express cargo. Negroes and a few whites of the long-shoreman type sat about, eating a meal that was being served in pannikins by evil-looking white scullions of the crew. There was an overpoweringly offensive reek in the compartment.

Painfully—for my whole body throbbed with pulsing soreness like an aching tooth, I brought myself to a sitting posture. I do not dwell upon my mental agony. That will be understood.

I rubbed my eyes. They seemed to be caked with something. I looked at my hands. They were black with grime. Then I looked at what I was wearing. They were vile, filthy rags! I had on a rough, dirty hickory shirt, open at the neck because there were no buttons on it, and nothing underneath. The trousers and coat, made—and made a long time before!—for a man many sizes smaller than I, were ragged, grease-caked, unbelievably ragged slops! On my feet were a pair of heavy, worn brogans, the soles thickly hobnailed, and no socks!

Set in a bulkhead close above me was a small, broken fragment of looking-glass for the steerage passengers to use for shaving. Standing—and, from weakness and pain, barely able to stand —I looked at my face in this. I was amazed to see how unshorn I was. There was a scraggly beard of days on my face—and, of course, I had been shaved on the morning of the funeral. Then when was that funeral? One side of my face was scraped and raw, and it was caked with old blood. It was old blood that I had felt in my eyes when I rubbed them. My jaw was so sore that it was agony to open my mouth. I had been kicked, and kicked hard, in the head. I was to find, a little later, that my left side, from shoulder to waist, was black and blue. I got an astonishingly thorough kicking there, too.

But how? Where? When? By whom? And what for?

I stared at my face in the fragment of glass. And I gave a groan. I was a hideous, bestial, obscene-looking object. The last I remembered of myself, I had been a seemly enough looking young man, dressed befittingly for the interment of a dead senator. I had been wearing a frock coat and a silk hat, no longer foolish-looking adornments for a man nearing twenty who looked twenty-five or older. My undergarments and socks had been of silk. I had carried a valuable gold watch and a wallet well stocked with money.

And now! Now I was an unkempt, unshorn, blood-caked animal in pain, wearing evil-looking, foul-smelling rags. I was huddled in the steerage of a steamer the name of which I did not know, whither bound I did not know, with a mob of negroes and a few of the lowest imaginable sort of whites—none of the latter, however, looking so horribly repellent as I did. I was a caricature of even a middling decent tramp!

How had this come about?

A negro sitting near me started playing a plaintive air on a jew's-harp. The

music aroused me, opened certain floodgates within me. Words uttered but a little while before by the old senator came back to me—tearing, searing, bludgeoning me.

The negro with the jew's-harp stopped playing when he saw me gazing at my face in the bit of broken glass, and snickered enjoyably.

"Feelin' bettuh, spoht?" he asked me. I stared dully at him. "'Cause yo' sho' looked lak yo' felt bad w'en you snuck on boa'd a hour or so ago," the good-natured negro went on.

He could tell me something about myself, then. I was reduced to being made aware of my own recent movements by a negro with a jew's-harp in the rank-smelling negro steerage of a steamer!

"What steamer is this?" I asked him. "And where is she bound?"

He named the steamer, then laughed with the gay abandonment of a child.

"Yo'-all sho' is de fust man Ah evuh see whut snuck on boa'd a boat 'ithout knowin' de name o' de boat or wheah-all she was goin'!" he said.

I recognized the steamer's name. She was one of the vessels of the line on which I had purchased my passage. She was bound for New York.

"Do you know what date this is?" I asked the negro.

"Sho' I knows de date—Ah bin waitin' long 'nough fo' de date t' come fo' me t' git back t' N' Yawk. Dis heah is de 'leventh o' Ma'ch."

The eleventh! The senator had been buried on March 7th. Four days whisked out of my life—and at the end of them to be in such a condition!

"Did you see me come on board this steamer?" I asked the negro.

"Ah sho' did," he replied. "Yo'-all snuck on boa'd jes' a li'l' w'ile befo' she sailed. Yo' seen dey wa'n't no man guardin' de gangplank whut led in heah—de man was called away fo' a minnit—an' den yo'-all beat it on boa'd an' hid behin' dem boxes ovuh yonduh until de boat dun leave de wha'f. Den yo'-all lay down on de barrels. Yo' sho' must ha' been some lit up, spoht, not t' 'membuh nothin' 'bout it!"

Of course I remembered nothing about it. I remembered nothing that had happened during the four days. No doubt I was drugged on the water front, while wandering there intoxicated; drugged, beaten, robbed of everything I carried and wore, shifted into the beastly rags I found myself wearing when I emerged to consciousness, and left to squirm out as best I could. And everything that I had done since that occurrence—if that was what had occurred—I had done in the subconscious state. Nothing of it was registered in my memory.

Soon the purser came to collect the steerage tickets. Of course I had no ticket. I had nothing. Handling me, naturally enough, as if I had been some peculiarly offensive dog, the purser took me before the captain of the steamer.

"Take him to the chief engineer," said the captain, deigning a mere disgusted glance at me out of the tail of his eye.

And so, being a stowaway, I was sent into the bunkers as a coal heaver.

It was, no doubt, in the circumstances, the best thing that could have happened to me. I worked with the regular watch of coal heavers, four hours on and four hours off, for the three-day trip to New York. The labor had taken twenty pounds from my frame—but it had sweated out of my system an unholy amount of liquor and the poison with which no doubt I had been drugged. And it took away the soreness of the painstaking beating I had received.

But when, grimy and tired, I peered through the open deadlight at New York, my head was bell clear. I had learned something. I had been soundly whipped by alcohol. It was my first

whipping of that sort. And it was my first awakening to the peril.

Four days torn out of my life, as pages are torn from a pad—and the swift, ironic ease of my slip from the environment of dignity to a debasement that was sardonic, to a degradation that jeered at the weakness of words to describe it. So this was what the old senator had meant—what, no doubt, he had foreseen!

I was awake. I would drink no more.

Yes, I swore that: "I shall drink no more."

That is a thing which it is so easy to swear.

CHAPTER IV.

I had funds in a Washington bank. The purser reluctantly risked a quarter on me wherewith to telegraph to the bank to remit money to me by wire, "identification waived." I remained on the vessel until the reply came. The purser's eyes popped when the bank informed me by wire that a thousand dollars awaited my call at the main office of the telegraph company on Broadway. He was an Englishman, and he exclaimed: "My word, this is an innovation!" He must have been badly bowled over when, a couple of days later, he received back the two bits which he had hesitatingly loaned me for the telegram, together with a box of very meritorious cigars.

I remained for two days at a Turkish bath in New York. I felt that it would require that much of roasting and steaming and rubbing, at least, to dispel from my nostrils the effluvia of the coal heavers' bunk compartment and the feel and smell of the hobo rags I had been wearing. I took to the bath a complete outfit of under and outer clothing that I might emerge upon the world, when I should feel completely satisfied that I was cleansed, looking and feeling like a human being.

I took no drink while at the Turkish bath. But how I longed for it! The grueling work in the coal bunkers had cleared my body of poisons and my head of vapors; but also it had depleted me. I was profoundly ashamed of, and depressed by, the racking experience I had been through. And—what I did not understand then, but understand now—the poison residue of the alcohol I had been absorbing for years was for the first time in years having no daily replenishment; and so that poison residue of alcohol in nerve cells, in brain cells, was screaming for more, more—more at any cost! Never mind your fears, never mind manhood, never mind anything; but more, more! Don't stop to think about it; don't weigh and hesitate; don't let decency, honor, good repute, or anything else sway you—more, more, for God's sake, more!

But no! I would not. The lesson had sunk in. I was afraid. I did not understand the physiology of drink then as I understand it now. But the simple fact that I was being so tugged at by drink—tugged at as with hands of power, hands that seemed to encircle my neck as if to choke me into submission—made me afraid, afraid! What was this, I could reflect with horror as the hands tugged at me, but the drunkard's craving? Then I was a drunkard, was I? I did not blink the fact. It seemed so; it must be so: I was a drunkard. Very well. But I would not remain a drunkard. I would withdraw from the domain of temptation and have it out with habit. "Habit"—yes, that is what I considered it; the routine habit of drinking. The mere automatic act of crooking the arm being stopped for a space, of course the habit would be extirpated. Excellent!

I went to an old colonial house deep in the Shenandoah Valley, of Virginia, and far from the railroad. The old gentlewoman who lived there was the widow of a high official of the Confed-

erate government, and occasionally she took guests. I was directed to the place by her nephew, an official of the Senate. I told him I was seedy and wanted a rest. "You look it," said he, and he told me about his aunt's old place in the Shenandoah Valley.

I arrived at night. The chatelaine, so truly the grande dame that she never found it needful to emphasize that fact by hint or allusion, received me in the great hall—a woman nearing sixty, in black, her snowy hair surmounted by a little cap of lace; a cultivated, widely traveled woman, compact of kindness and graciousness, young in face and in heart, of slender means, and with the carriage of an empress.

She gave a start as, with an old negro following with my bags, I approached her in the wide, rather dim-lit hall. It surprised me that for a few seconds before she made me welcome, her eyes searched my face with an odd intentness. It came out, at the meal which had been prepared for me, that I bore a most amazing resemblance to her son —her only son. No, he was not living, she told me, passing quickly to another subject.

It was not until near the end of my stay at the old house, after, in moments of boyish confidence, I had apprised her of something of my own affairs, that she mentioned again this only son. He had, it appeared, become addicted to drink in his early manhood; he had—"poor boy, he did not know what he was doing!"—stripped her of the competence her husband had bequeathed to her; and ten years before he had been frozen to death on the streets of Baltimore—"while he was not himself." She told me these things in a hushed voice. She knew that I, who so astonishingly "favored" her son, was grappling with the desire to drink. "My poor boy never had the will to stop. You have, else you would not be here. You will win."

There were a hundred acres of ground around the rambling old house —crop land, meadow, orchard, and woods. Spring, disdaining the inhemming mountains, had swept into the valley. Apple and pear and cherry trees were in blossom. Lilacs were in bud. The birds were coming up from the South and searching for their old nesting places. The air was bland and sweet. You could feel the peace of the place with your very hands!

I reveled in it. I was tired. I had been on the job, out in the open, since my eleventh year; I had lived at too keen a clip, with never a let-up. I had not taken good care of myself. My health was all right—it would be long before I should know what it meant to have any but the most buoyantly good physical health. But I was mentally, nervously weary. I had recently come a hard cropper, my first, with the drink.

So here was a blossom-fragrant hospice to revel in! I worked like a horse with the two field negroes who tilled the ground. I put in whole days, from morning till night, laboring in the truck patch. I pruned the fruit trees. I mended, oiled, polished harness. I rehoused the poultry. I renewed the pen of the swine. I sawed and chopped wood. I found a saddle horse and explored the valley and the mountains on his back. After supper, until bedtime, I browsed in the fine old library, dipping into old seventeenth and eighteenth-century books that had not been plucked from their shelves for generations. And every night I went to bed —an old four-poster that had been slept in by colonial governors of the Old Dominion—dog-tired, clear-headed, happy.

The desire for drink did not leave me, though. I had supposed that, with so clean and normal a life, with all of these wholesome out-of-doors activities, that desire would promptly flee. But it did not. I began to understand,

vaguely and wonderingly, that, after all, it was not simply marionette habit, the mere mechanical practice of hoisting the glass to the lips, that must be battled with. The thing lay far deeper than that. It was, I dimly began to discern, something that was entangled with the fiber of my life. It snuggled at the root of moral, not merely physical, impulse.

The desire lurked and hovered, I found. It would sweep over me in unexpected moments, swiftly, swoopingly, with the all but resistless power of a great wind! Then one had to cling hard to anchorages. At such times, I would feel limp and exhausted when the onset of desire passed; passed, I would sometimes imagine, as upon a jeering wind, with hoots and screams of derision. Then I would be glad, glad that I was at a place where there was no possibility of my getting anything to drink.

CHAPTER V.

I was entering upon my second month at the tranquil old place, with its peacefulness as of a cloister.

One evening, at dusk, I was changing my clothes for supper, after half a day in the saddle. Suddenly I stood motionless, with my collar only partly adjusted. Brilliant music, the sounds seeming fairly to leap up the wide stairs and to swirl in wondrous gusts through the half-open door of my room, brought me up all standing. The music, rich, ornate, glowing, seemed to penetrate and fill every corner and cranny of the rambling old house, to pulsate through the world!

It was the music of a harp. A few months before I had heard, in Washington, an opera rarely given in America—Goldmark's sensuously beautiful "Queen of Sheba." This harp music I now listened to was a dazzling improvisation on the ever-recurring "fate motive" of that opera. I recognized it because, for days after I had heard the opera, that surging minor motive, with its suggestion of authoritative prophecy, had throbbed persistently through my consciousness.

There was a harp—a very old and splendid Italian instrument—in a corner of the drawing-room. It had belonged to a sister of Mrs. Vance, my hostess; a sister who had died abroad many years before. Two or three times, after supper, Mrs. Vance, who professed no skill, had sat before the harp and played a simple air or plucked a few chords from the strings which she kept renewed in memory of the sister who had been an artiste at the instrument.

But what I now heard was harp music that rang with a rich surprise, as might a sudden, triumphant burst of melody from concordant bells in a place where no chimes were known to be.

Who played? Man or woman? Mrs. Vance had said nothing of another guest expected. No doubt, then, this other guest had come unheralded during my half-day absence. A little late, I had, on returning from my ride, hurried upstairs to dress; so there would have been no time for Mrs. Vance to tell me of a new guest.

I was a little disturbed—selfishly. For a month, as the only guest of the beloved old place, I had as good as owned it. The chatelaine, not less because of her ever-flowing kindness than because I resembled her dead son, had pampered me. I had cherished the sense of undivided guest possession. The healing, pleasant, unbroken silence—the silence that broods agreeably, that waits patiently, but is never heavy or oppressive—was something to bask in. Now there would be another to share these things. But, at all events, that other, man or woman, would be interesting. He, or she, had a wild, unfet-

tered heart for music! A man, no doubt. A woman would pluck more daintily, more gingerly, at the strings of a harp. These chords had the reckless sweep of a man's hands. I hoped the player might be a man. I had never overcome a certain shyness with women.

As I finished dressing, the player rocketed into Berlioz's "Pizzicati"—all dashing bravura, a million tiny, crystal-clear icicles falling tinglingly, then crashingly, on the frozen surface of a stream.

So I descended the stairs—slowly, a little apprehensively. This harpist might, after all, be a woman! In that case, it would be a bother to keep out of her way, especially during the long evenings. A woman would claim the library as her own, of course.

But, as I descended, how inspiriting, how inspiring, how *lawless* the music sounded! It made me catch at my breath. It so defiantly surmounted the Plane of Every Day! I remembered, resolutely brushing back the memory, that the sound of splendid music always had aroused to intensity the drink desire within me. So I reached the arch dividing hall and drawing-room and looked in.

She was seated before the instrument by an open window, with her back to the hall. She was in white—a traveling dress of white serge, I noticed afterward. A low-turned lamp on a near-by table threw out wan little gleams that found lodgment in the thick braids of her glossy dark hair, coiled at the back. I could see her white hands darting over the strings—hands and fingers, miracles of dexterous swiftness!

Mrs. Vance, bearing another lamp, came down the hall from the supper room. The music suddenly ceased in the middle of a passage, with a double chord that sounded like rain dashing against a window. Our chatelaine was introducing us—"Mr. Vernon—Miss Northway." She rose, offered me one of the miracle-working hands, smiled a little absorbedly; there were the usual commonplaces of talk, during which I could abashedly make note of her.

I cannot tell why I instantly thought of her as a maiden of old Rome. Perhaps it was because of some pictures I had seen—one very lovely one, by Alma-Tadema, I think—of vestal virgins. She looked like those pictures. She had their warm ivory skin, their blue-black hair, their flashing, somber, dark eyes, their slender, lissome grace; she was like them in her sheer aristocratic fineness of flesh, of contour, of finish. She was twenty-three or four, I judged; tall, of that sort of purely seeming slenderness that is deceiving; lithe, a great mistress of the movements of her body; liquid-eyed, but using her eyes to see, not to languish with, and returning your gaze very steadily; smiling, when that was the requirement, but serious of face, a little cogitating, with an odd little habit of biting the lower lip when not at talk; altogether a full-flowered woman rather than a girl.

I am trying to describe her as she seemed to me when first I saw her. I can only say that I thought her surpassingly beautiful then. But that is different from being the archetype of all that is beautiful in the world. Yet she was quickly to become that to me!

She had arrived during the afternoon from Washington. It came out at supper quite by way of chance talk that Mrs. Vance had not known her before. Finding herself a bit run down, she had made inquiries as to a place where quiet, with a great deal of out-of-doors living, might be found. Somebody had told her of the beautiful, restful old house and farm in the Shenandoah Valley. So she had taken the liberty of coming without first inquiring if it would be agreeable for

Mrs. Vance to have her. Mrs. Vance's smile told her that she need have had no such hesitancy.

"Northway—Northway." Sitting opposite her at the table, and learning now that she was from Washington, I recalled a certain mournful story, formerly current in Washington, with which that unusual name was associated. I considered it a pity, I remember, that this gifted woman should bear a name so bound up with the implications of another Washington woman's life tragedy. But I soon dismissed that consideration. There was nothing tragic, there was only the diffusion of happiness and beauty, from this woman named Northway.

"The harp is not taught in this country as you play it, my dear," Mrs. Vance said to her at supper.

Miss Northway explained that she had had harp instruction in France. She had lived abroad from childhood to her eighteenth year, and had got her schooling in France mainly; the last two years of it in Austria. Her father had been military attaché first at Paris and then at Vienna. He was a colonel of engineers, it appeared, now on duty at the war department in Washington. Her mother had died two years after her birth.

I may have learned these things at a little later time than at that first supper-table talk. It is highly probable that I did. No doubt I only became apprised in a gradual way of the facts which I now set down in order. Young ladies do not reveal such matters at their first casual meeting with strangers. This was more than twenty years ago. Writers of fiction will glibly provide you with extended verbatim reports of conversations between two persons cast away on a desert island fifty, a hundred, years ago. I have always admired such feats. But the only passages of talk of the long ago that one really remembers are those in which some of the phrases have burned their way into the memory, poignant words uttered at junctures, at crossroads, of one's life.

But if I do not remember the talk at that quiet supper table, if I do not recall the order in which the things which I have written were related, I do recollect very well the simple, unaffected speech of this woman in the full flower of her beauty who already had cast a spell of magic over me. I remember that I could steal shy glances at her and yet be naming her, in my stirred heart of a boy, a "rose of the Tiber." For the vestal-virgin image of her clung, and as a Roman white rose she remained fancifully in my imagination from that first hour of knowing her. Twenty is a fecund age for such fancies! I marvel now that, at that unsubtle age, I could have so controlled my swift ardor to enact the part of one only politely interested in her. I was to be told later that I had seemed quite distinctly bored at that supper. It was the first and only compliment I ever received for proficiency in acting.

She was tired from the journey, and after the meal she remained but a little while in the drawing-room. She was asked, I recall, if she sang. Yes, she sang. She sat at the harp at once, and, with her foot on the muting pedal, struck a great, soft major chord. Guilelessly, I fancied that because she had been so much abroad, she would sing something brilliant and florid, something all coloratura in French or Italian. But no. In a deep, rich contralto, she sang that tender old ballad of the dusk and the dew and the fireflies, the first line of which runs: "Just a song at twilight, when the lights are low"; I forget the name of it. Then she took her candle from the hall table, bade us good night, and went to her room. I remember that I sat sprawled and motionless in a deep leather chair in the library, with no

light save that of the moon through the windows, until after midnight. I knew very well that something had happened to me, something that I had scarcely even thought of before, and I was trying to plumb the meaning of it.

Youth, propinquity, imagination—these are the age-old elements in any tale of love. If this were such a tale, instead of a forthright story of actual life, there would be much to write of words and incidents standing out in one's memory of the glamorous blur of happiness into which during the next month all things fused.

We fell quickly into the out-of-doors companionship of a pair of young people, who, by chance thrown together, liked riding and walking, horses and dogs. It was at first, tacitly if not explicitly, an association that seemed to be based upon camaraderie, if such a thing be possible between a young man and a young woman. On my part it never really was that at any time, of course, for I loved her from the first hour I saw her. But on hers, for the first weeks, it was wholly a matter of accepting the only companionship that offered, and accepting it with the graciousness that was natural to her. She was the first woman near my own age with whom I ever had been in such close and protracted contact. I had always been busy, I had never had the time before. And she was the only woman, before or after, with whom I could be on terms of entire ease. I loved her. There was not the remotest possibility that she would ever care for me. So be it! Meanwhile, we were together. That is how I was able to view it. And there was something about her, something that seemed to descend upon and permeate me from the plane upon which, I felt sure, she alone lived, that was healing, that could make me forget. Nearness to her brought back my self-respect. The desire for drink did not visit me after she came. There was, I now discerned, something fine, roseate, beautiful in life; she was at the summit of this life beautiful; and what a towering, sun-wrapped summit that was, how loftily it reared its serene face above the morass in which I had been weltering! I knew that already I had been impaired, if not outwardly marked, by drink. To be with her was to be able to forget that, or, better, to feel a strange, warming certainty, such as I had not before experienced, that impairment from that cause was forever at an end.

Carefully educated, familiar with the best in letters and art, widely traveled, in touch with the fresh currents of contemporary thought, there was not in her a trace of sophistication, of preciosity, of the superciliousness of the social order from which she sprang and in the orbit of which she always had moved.

Spring was in the mountains, and we rode among them, clambered over them on foot, fished trout streams, prowled for arbutus, feasted upon the high, racy air redolent of balsam and blossom. She was a natural creature of the woods and of wide spaces, a hamadryad in brown corduroy and high brown boots who never needed a hand at climbing or fording. Yet I fancied I observed in her a certain brooding habit, the signs of a peculiar preoccupation not unlike melancholy. She spoke always in a repressed key. Often her quiet, hearty laugh—for she had a strong sense of fun—would break off with astonishing suddenness, a flash as of pain would swiftly sober her features, and she would fall to biting her lower lip, an unconscious habit with her; or, in the midst of humming an air in her deep, searching tone, the humming would of a sudden sink into silence, and I would find her staring straight ahead, nor, for a time, would she seem to hear me when I spoke to

her. I was puzzled, perhaps a little piqued, by these moments of her swift, complete aloofness.

There was no attempt at love-making, not even the dropping, by me, of the flowery or fervid hints which a young man within all-day arm reach of a bewitching and beloved woman, wholly unchaperoned, might excusably fall into. This woman was not for me! I was as sure of that as I was that I had been christened Richard Vernon. I had, indeed, at times, when I thought of such a thing at all, definitely decided that not for a good many years was I to cast my mind toward any woman. I was undisciplined, it had been proven that I was in the leash of a habit. Not before I felt very sure that that leash was forever snapped would I ask any woman to take so dubious a chance as to link her life with mine!

No essays at love-making, I repeat. But a woman of twenty-four—she had told me her age—would have little use of her instinct or eyes did she not plumb the mind of a boy of twenty. One day—it was near the end of our first month together—her horse stumbled and went to his knees. We were riding through the woods on a steep, pathless down grade to cross a rocky mountain stream. She was slipping forward from her side saddle when, being luckily alongside, I reached out and pulled her to the front of my own saddle. I felt her breath on my face, and I gasped speechlessly—I could not have said a word for the wealth of Ormus and Ind! She was obliged to encircle my back with one of her arms. With her free hand she patted one of my gloved hands.

"You are a nice, strong, plucky boy," she breathed in my ear, "and I wish you were my brother."

Then she slid to the ground and remounted her horse, forbidding me to dismount to help her.

"Brother!" That, no doubt, I thought, had been a word deliberately chosen; she had seized upon the right instant to utter it. Even so, I was glad. From the first I had entertained no hope of ever being the lover. Well, I could be the better brother if only because I had no other sister!

So came the day when all of these phases of an intimacy such as I have tried to picture were to be swept away on the torrent of an amazing, a tragic, revelation.

CHAPTER VI.

At dusk one evening we left the supper table to view from the garden a slowly fading afterglow. Mrs. Vance usually had accompanied us on these after-supper rambles, but she had gone to her room with a headache early in the afternoon. Miss Northway, interested in the nesting birds about the place, led the way to a mass of lilac bushes near the old carriage gate of stone.

On the day before we had discovered three tiny, just-hatched nestlings of a song sparrow in one of those bushes. As we now drew near the shrubbery, we were arrested by the agitated actions of the mother bird and her mate. They were flying frantically over the bush where the nest lay and giving voice to their visible anguish. My companion, swiftly the champion of little creatures, sped to the nesting bush. She was stretching out her hands to part the foliage when, following her a few paces behind, I called out to her.

"Better let me have a look first," I said. "There is probably a snake in the nest."

If she heard, it was too late. She parted the outer twigs with hands and arms to gain a view of the nest. She immediately uttered a low cry, quickly withdrew her hands, and, shivering,

stood peering in the dimness at the right one.

Then I was beside her and clutching the hand at which she gazed. Bending close, I saw in the fast-falling light that the snake had struck at the end of the middle finger. I thrust the wounded finger into my mouth and sucked what venom there might be. I had heard no rattle, but it might be some poisonous snake other than a rattler. A shudder ran through her, and she was limp in my arms.

I half carried her to a near-by bench, and, while doing that, my self-imposed discipline broke down. I poured out a wild flood of endearments, the first words of love I had ever uttered There was no helping it. The miracle of holding her close in my arms forced the words from my lips. She was not the sort of woman to faint, but she was drooping from terror and loathing of the serpent that had struck her.

I felt her hands tighten upon my shoulders as I plunged on recklessly with my words of love, nor did she strive to stop me nor to thrust me away. But as I placed her upon the bench she looked up at me with an expression of brooding wonderment.

"I am sorry," I heard her say in a tone scarcely audible. "I was afraid—I meant to go away——"

But the possible consequences of the snake's bite flew back to my mind. The wound must be looked after. First I pulled a branch from a tree and clubbed the snake, which was wriggling off toward the gate on the far side of the bush.

With no very definite notion of what I was about, I rushed to the dining room of the house. Zenobia, the old black cook, was clearing away the supper table. I asked her if there happened to be any liquor about the place. From a locked compartment of the sideboard she produced a decanter of brandy and gave it to me. I seized a glass and a carafe of water and hurried back to the garden.

Of course I held to the antiquated notion that the only antidote for snake bite was liquor and a great deal of it; that was one of the fallacies of my boyhood. I do not recall, such was my state of excitement, if I really expected a gentle, highly organized young woman, the victim of a serpent's bite, to proceed deliberately to drink herself to a state of stupefaction for the purpose of absorbing or throwing off the snake's venom. I was wrought to tension with love and sympathy for her, and I wanted to help her, with no clear idea of how to go about it.

She was standing in a posture of weariness beside the bench, with one of her hands resting limply on its high back, when I reached her side. Coming close to her, I could see in the gloom that she was biting her lower lip in the odd way I had so often noticed before. I poured into the goblet a stiff drink of the brandy, filled the glass with water from the carafe, and held it out to her.

"You'll hate it abominably, I know," I said, still with a very nebulous idea of what I was about, "but it is said to be the only thing. The snake probably was one of the harmless sort, but there's no use chancing that it wasn't."

Even as I spoke, the aroma of the brandy shot swiftly through my senses, and, for an instant, the old desire stirred hotly within me. But I quickly throttled it.

"What is it?" she asked me in a low tone.

"Brandy. You will need it to ward off the poison, if there was poison."

I held out the globlet to her, was about to place it in her hand. But she suddenly stood rigid, turned away her head, and struck at her forehead with her closed hand.

"Take it away, for God's sake!" she said hoarsely. "Quick! Quick! Be-

fore I lose myself—before I forget—before I yield again!"

I stood rooted. "Lose myself!" "Forget!" Yield again!" Those were curious words. What could they mean? For half a moment there was silence, while I stupidly went over the words in my numbed mind, trying to cudgel some meaning from them. Then——

"I thought you knew!" she broke out in a passionate, half-sobbing tone. "I thought you knew and were chivalrously pretending all these weeks that you did not know! But you can't know—you can't! I should hate to think that you did! I should hate to think you could offer drink to me, after telling me you cared for me—that anybody could offer it to me who knew what it had meant to me, what it had brought upon me, what misery, what bitterness, what degradation, what death in life, what a curse, what a hell!"

Then I understood. Then my heart and mind raged with love and honor for her, for the splendor of her bravery, for the sheer beauty of her courage! Her name, "Northway"—how well I knew her story, never supposing it to be hers!

I cast the goblet to the ground, dashed the decanter of brandy against a pillar of the old stone gate, and gathered her in my arms. No doubt there were sobs of pity, of pity and of love, too, in my throat, but I fought them down. She had broken into a passion of weeping, and I held her close.

"I did not know before, but I know now—I remember," I said as quietly as I could when there was such need to master my voice. "And I love you more, if that can be, for knowing it."

"But, oh, I thought you knew from the beginning, from the time you first heard my name!" she sobbed brokenly.

"I did not. It never came to me—until a moment ago. Then I remembered. And if you can care for me just a little, it will help me to win the heavy fight I've got before me."

She looked up wonderingly into my face out of eyes wet with tears.

"Yes," I said. "The same sort of a fight."

"You!"

Never, before or after, have I heard so much amazement expressed in one word.

"Yes, I," I replied. "You were so much more generous than I—you told me first. But the same thing has been tugging at me, trying to drag me down for a long time. Very recently it brought me down hard. I came here to begin my win-out from it. For I am going to win out—and so are you!"

Again I could feel her hands grip my shoulders.

"Oh, God help us both, we must—we must!" she gasped, averting her face.

She was a woman in the full flower of her beauty, a little older than I, yet somehow I felt as if I held a tired child in my arms. For I knew of the blight that had descended early upon her.

"Come," I said, an arm about her shoulders, starting for the house. "You are overwrought; you need, I know, to be alone. The snake bite will not harm you. I don't believe anything will harm you. God knows, I reckon, all about the fight some of His children have to make. There's nothing I want so much in life as to be allowed to love you—even if you can't care for me."

We had reached the steps. She turned, brought my face to a level with hers with her two hands, and kissed my forehead.

"I do care—I care a great deal," she said, a little hoarse from weeping. "And I am glad that you care—now that you know."

Then she passed into the great, dim hall and slowly mounted the stairs to

her room, clutching the banister rail for support.

I have set down this incident in such detail as I remember it because it forms an integral, indeed a basic, part of my own story. I possess the average man's distaste for emotionalism, for scenes. But if we were, in that hour, a pair of young people powerfully wrought upon, there was reason enough. A great fear preyed upon both of us. Already the spirits of both of us had been steeped in the bitterness of savage defeat, and defeat inflicted by the same enemy. We could hardly have been expected to take it stolidly when we came upon the discovery that such a bond united us.

CHAPTER VII.

I spent most of that night trudging the starlit roads. I must have walked many miles, for I was dog-tired when I reached my room at dawn and turned in for a few hours' sleep.

By a singular chance, by a whimsical caprice of destiny, I had come upon, and already loved unchangeably, a woman for whom, far back in the rarely aroused chambers of pity of my mind, I had for long felt the sympathy of a boy unusually susceptible to enkindlement by chivalrous sentiment.

I knew about her only what, with sinister and grossly unfair implications, had been whispered in Washington for several years, to be taken up in time, of course, by a far wider and even more avid world of gossip.

Like a miasmatic mist rising from the Potomac, these stories of her dipsomaniacal lapses had from time to time, and for years past, enveloped the capital, penetrated everywhere, found lodgment in the minds of the compassionate and the cruel, the sniggering and the sorry. There had been amazing amplification and distortion of the facts, of course. These recurring lapses through an uncontrollable desire for drink of Bettie Northway—her débutante name adhered to her everywhere—became a morsel for the mastication of high and low, and the cud increased in size as it was passed from mouth to mouth through a world of prattlers.

There could be no such thing as an absolute discrediting of the stories. Even I, when first I heard them, could not do that, loath as I was to believe them. The array of facts was too solid and circumstantial, even the embellishments too replete with the color of plausibility. I remember how, without in any sense striving to attain a pose of toploftical aloofness from gossip, I felt the sniggered stories rankling within me, arousing my secret hostility to the men who told them, when I first heard them at the capitol.

I had never seen the unfortunate figurante in these stories. I never expected to see her. But one could be permitted to pity her infirmity, I suppose—particularly one who himself had the same infirmity. She was a woman, and a woman in black trouble. Who knew the origin of that trouble? Who knew the inner processes of her mind and heart? Who, save herself, could tell of suddenly besieging, irresistible impulses, of transmitted desires, of battles perhaps heroically fought, only to be lost time and again?

Envy, more than death itself, loves a shining mark. The woman was known everywhere to be well born, beautiful, accomplished, rich in her own right from her mother's estate. She had had a brilliant coming-out in Washington. Many times in her débutante days she had been a house guest at the White House. She had been presented in London, in St. Petersburg, in Berlin, in Vienna. And then suddenly Washington made the astounding—I was going to write the joyous—discovery that this young, highly placed

woman, with all of the splendors of her person and mind and environment, was a dipsomaniac, a woman who yielded, unaccountably but no less surely, to frequent wild impulses to indulge recklessly in drink, not privately, where her infirmity might be screened, but publicly, in full sight of the world!

So envy found its dazzling mark! Here was a woman to be torn down! The tearing down became in due time an accomplished fact. It became known that she had withdrawn from all social activities. It was not known whether she remained in Washington. She was no longer seen anywhere in public. The stories gradually ceased. I had not heard her name mentioned for, I judge, nearly two years. That is why there was little likelihood that I ever could have associated the absorbed, wistful woman I had met at the remote old farmhouse in the Shenandoah Valley with that Bettie Northway whose name and whose infirmity had been a toothsome confection in the wide maw of Washington gossip, and for whom, from my first hour of hearing about her, I had felt a commiseration so poignant that it hurt.

So, unconscious of the night, little sensing where I was, I stumbled over the dark roads, thinking of the courage I had seen her show, of her agonized thrusting aside of what plainly had been a hideous temptation—thinking of how she was trying, of how, no doubt, she always had been trying.

I had given her the love of a boy since the first hour I met her. But now I longed to give her the protection of a man. I was, I reflected, considerably older than my age, the result of having been at grips with life since early boyhood. I was equipped for a man's work. I had not been master of myself, but I could be, would be.

What a glorious, worth-while thing it would be if we two, equally marked by the same down-dragging weakness, could make our fight together against that weakness—bracing, bulwarking each other in the bad moments, sustaining each other with vistas of all the better things of life when danger impended, marking off the weeks and months and years of self-conquest, until finally, in a great hour, sure of ourselves for all of the future time to be, we could link arms with victory and laugh—a little sadly perhaps, but laugh nevertheless—at the old fears!

Oh, I wanted that, longed for it to be, stumbling that night along the dark roads!

I wanted it no less when, awakening in mid-morning, I found the already high spring sun streaming through the windows and the curtains bellying in the warm May breeze. Wanted it, but was soon swept by a depressing conviction that it could not be. I would never even suggest such a thing. No doubt she had had a very resolute purpose in calling me "brother." By no possibility could I take advantage of her agitation of the evening before, of words she had uttered in the stress of deep emotion, to press upon her even an intimation of the wish that still held my mind in an exaltation no less high than it had been while I had been aimlessly traversing the dim roads. "Brother?" Well, I would be that, if she would let me; a good one, I hoped; a brother who understood, who wanted to help.

I dressed slowly, with these things simmering in a mind little refreshed by my very few hours of sleep. Her room door was wide open when I passed it. Could she have gone? The thought of that was a knife stab. I stood dully at the head of the stairs, cogitating. If she had gone—well, what was life going to mean for me, if she had gone? Not alone now, but ever—what would it ever mean? I suppose that, up to that moment, I never had contemplated any prospect so tasteless, so devoid of

any element of invitation, so hopelessly black.

But she had not gone. From the porch I saw her, a figure all in white, walking slowly back and forth by the crumbling stone fence at the far side of the peach orchard. I vaulted the porch rail and raced toward her. Suddenly I pulled up to a lounging walk. My running might alarm her. I did not want to do that. Or it might make me absurd in her eyes. I could not tolerate the thought of being ridiculous in those eyes of all the eyes in the world! So I approached her at a cool, leisurely swing. The studious, attitudinizing imbecility of youth.

She was seated on the stone fence, patting the head of an idolatrous setter dog when I reached her side. She was pale, and there were faint bluish circles under her eyes. There was a tranquil yet appraising expression in those steady, courageous eyes that I had not seen there before. I thought of her as of a shadowy white princess who might vanish at any instant; a childish sort of image, yet one that satisfied me, except the vanishing part.

I sat beside her, and we spoke at first of inconsequent things; of the splendor of the May morning, the worshiping upward gaze of the dog, the utter contentment of the cattle in the distant upland meadows. I lifted her hand to see the snake wound. It had all but healed during the night. She had not felt it at all, had scarce thought about it, she said.

"But I have been thinking a great deal," she said in her habitually repressed tone, "of what you told me last night about yourself. You are so buoyant, you seem so unscarred by——" She broke off, but of course I knew what she meant.

"Unscarred, yes—outwardly," I said. "So far, that is. But I know what an unholy scarring the habit would give me if I went on with it. And I know, too, how I must watch myself, every hour, every minute, after all that has happened to make me afraid of it—afraid!"

I could see her hands nervously clasping and unclasping in her lap.

"I know that fear," she said quickly. "I am never without it. But about yourself; am I inquisitive to ask? I mean, how long ago it began, the growth of it, the——" Impulsively she dropped one of her hands on my arm and allowed it to rest there.

"Yes, I know what you mean," I said. And so I told her about it. I made a very simple statement of it, grouping periods and incidents, and glossing over nothing. Even so, it astonished me, thus reviewing the thing in actual words for the first time, to find how ugly it sounded.

She listened, regarding my face intently, wincing a little when I mentioned my recent plight in the Southern city and on board the steamer, her hand tightening on my arm.

"I needed that lesson," I concluded. "And it is going to stick! It makes me ashamed now to remember how impatient, how irritated, I was when the old senator said to me the things I have told you. I would give a good deal if he were alive again, that I might tell him how I now appreciate that kindly warning."

"So would I," she electrified me by saying. "He often spoke to me in the same dear, kindly way."

"You knew him so well as that?" I said amazedly.

"He was my mother's father," she replied in a very low tone. "He told you of his son—my Uncle Carroll—who died so young of—who died of the thing we are talking about. But he could not tell you of my mother, his favorite daughter, who died in an institution in France from the same cause two years after I was born. He could not speak of her to anybody.

He never mentioned her even to me. And when he learned that I was going the same way, he——" Her voice broke, her eyes filled, she could not go on. I asked her not to say any more.

But a swift revision of my beliefs on heredity took place in my startled mind. What a man of sorrows my leonine old senator had been! And with what reason! Here, then, were four generations of men and women born with a transmitted curse—the senator's father, of whose death from drink he had told me; himself, perpetuating the curse, but conquering it in his own person; the senator's son and daughter; and now the daughter's daughter, sitting beside me weeping, a woman young and beautiful, but already clawed by the same pursuing devil. Yet the solemn, pompous gentlemen who professed to know all about it, the psychologists, neurologists, alienists, or whatever high-sounding names they chose to bestow upon themselves, asserted that there could be no such a thing as the hereditary transmission of a mental impulse or desire!

"Listen!" she said suddenly, drying her eyes and clasping my arm with both of her hands. "We both need help. We are trying—trying! But we overestimate our strength. We think we are strong, and then we fall—fall! It is so ghastly, so hideous! Oh, I hope I may never fall again—and how I hope that you may not! We are young. Life is so worth while, so beautiful when it is lived aright, isn't it? We do not *need* that other terrible stimulation. Our youth, the joy of life itself, ought to be stimulation enough—*is* enough! But we two need help. No one can stand alone against it. We imagine that we can, but we cannot. It has gone too far with us. But I know we could help each other."

My own thought, formed while plodding the starlit roads! It set my brain to reeling to find that she had thought of that, too. But she could not mean what I had meant.

"If only you would let me try to help you—if there were some way I could help you!" was all I could say.

"Can't you think of any way?" she asked.

There was a wan, tearful smile on her face. But it seemed impossible. I did not dare.

"We could be together, could we not?" Her voice sounded far away.

"Together?" I repeated stupidly.

"You told me last night that you loved me. It made me happy. And I love you. I thought about it all night—and I love you dearly, dearly!" A hot flush had overspread her pale face, but she went on bravely: "We could be together that way, I mean. We could marry, could we not? I know very well you would never ask me, and so I must ask you."

She stayed me for an instant with her thrust-out hands when I would have grasped her in my arms.

"I am not—wicked," she said, pulling my face about with her hand so that she could gaze into my eyes unflinchingly. "That has been surmised, has been intimated," she went on, with a little sob in her throat, "but it is not true—it is not true! You know what my trouble is, you are going to help me. But there never has been anything else. I say that to you, who have the right to know, in the presence of God!"

And so, her head drooping a little wearily, she came to me.

We were married in Baltimore two days later.

There had been of late months, she told me, differences between herself and her father. He had become justifiably angry with her, she said generously; I would understand why. It would be painful for her to see him

just yet. But she wanted me to go to Washington to announce our marriage to her father.

I found him at his war-department office. He was a distinguished-looking man of fifty-five, tall, gray-mustached, bronzed; finished in manner, a little hard of eye—the military man transmuted into the typical militay attaché. A telegram had been sent to him, informing him of the marriage.

When I entered his office he rose quickly from his desk and measured me with keen, sharply appraising eyes.

"Well, there are six feet of you, Vernon, and you've got a pretty square jaw," he said, and held out his hand.

We talked for an hour. The hardness went out of his eye when he spoke of his daughter.

"You know the danger—you're prepared to stand guard?" he said when I rose.

"Yes."

"In standing off that enemy you'll have won a victory worth while—and you've got a winner's look. Good-by and good luck!" and gave me his sinewy hand again.

There is a wide gulf between the guardedness of fifty-five and the sanguineness of twenty. But, at twenty, I could not have been expected to know that.

"Danger!" Who thinks of danger when he loves a woman? Particularly, what imaginative, undisciplined, self-confident boy does that? Our mutual high resolve, our exaltation of purpose, our fear, our will to stave off defeat—these would be guard enough.

Thus, at twenty, I assumed a dual responsibility, a double peril, when one alone had proven too heavy for me, had already borne me to the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.

We went to New York. There was a place waiting for me there.

The measure for the building of a canal in Nicaragua had been before Congress for some years, would come up again, with the lobby in heavy array, at the next session.

I had been about the capitol, House side and Senate side, for eight years, nor had I wasted my time. I knew the national legislative game inside and out. I was familiar with all the carefully screened details of how the carrying of any proposition before Congress, big or little, good or a mere grab, was to be approached, attacked, manipulated, jockeyed, thrust through. I knew, more concretely, precisely how every senator of the United States and all of the important members of the House of Representatives stood toward the building of a canal in Nicaragua.

New York was the headquarters of the Nicaragua Canal projectors. So I went to that headquarters. The offer had been made to me before my old senator's death, but I would not accept it then. The work was perfectly legitimate. The company that wanted to build the canal was composed of substantial men, and its lobby worked more in the open than any other lobby ever had. I could furnish the leaders of this lobby with suggestions, even plans. The work did not take much of my time. It did not, I know now, take enough of my time—at that period of my life I should have been five times as busy. The yearly salary was astonishingly large for one of my age, but by no means excessive in consideration of the services I could render, and there was no limit set upon the money allowed for expenses. I could maintain my wife in her accustomed manner of living and remain entirely independent of her private means.

Our apartment overlooked Central Park on its west side, and was well appointed. When I was not at the office, we kept to the apartment a great deal for the first few months. There were good reasons for our doing this.

The foremost reason was—safety. We talked it over often, faced the facts, we would incur no unnecessary risks.

Where, in New York, is there not drinking? In what city, in all the world, does drink so engirdle, hem in, press upon, the people who live in it, high and low, rich and poor, brave and base, as it does in New York?

New York is unique in that respect in this country. Its compressed area, its lack of room, is one factor that helps to make it so. Chicago is drunken, but has room for its drunkenness. San Francisco, New Orleans, other major American cities are drunken in spots. New York is not so drunken as it is *drinking*. It is the world's capital, not for drunkenness, but for *drinking*. In New York there is no possibility of going about either business or pleasure without brushing elbows everywhere with drink. If, by your own deliberate election, for reasons of prudence or for whatever reasons, the people you know do not drink, then unnumbered others with whom you must come into contact, if you are not to hermitize, do drink; drink either intermittently and cautiously, "for sociability," as they phrase it, or else incessantly and recklessly, making a business of it.

Drink is the great universal, constant, unescapable fact of life in New York. It is as prevalent and permeative as weather. It is as enveloping as air. It is as insistent as rain. It is the one thing that you are never permitted, for one waking instant, to forget.

And this was a great, daunting, all but insurmountable fact that my wife and I quickly had to face when we went to live in New York. It was a fact that served to imprison us. We were virtually shut out of life by the practical operation of this fact. We were all but debarred the society of our kind. We were by necessity self-marooned. We were thrown almost absolutely upon each other for companionship.

Both of us knew plenty of people in New York. But they all drank. They were not drunkards, of course. But they played with drink, nibbled at it, flirted with it, caressed it, took heavy chances with it, for the ample and excellent reason that they liked it or loved it. And the brighter, the more clever, the more companionable, the more lovable these people were, the more deeply were they involved with drink. The interesting, lovable ones seemed to lean upon the drink, to *need* it more than the others not so lovable or so interesting.

I would try to think of a few—just a few—New York men of my acquaintance who, as nondrinkers, might be asked to drop in upon us at our apartment. There were none. I did not know any New York men who did not drink. They were all, in some degree, drinking men. The excellent reason for this, of course, was that I had met all of these men when I myself was drinking; and when a man is drinking himself all of the men he meets are pretty liable to be drinkers. I could not ask these men to my home and not offer them a drink when they came. That is not done in New York. Nor could I have drink at my home. So I was debarred asking them at all.

My wife, of course, knew many charming, accomplished, well-bestowed people in New York, had often been a guest at their town houses and country homes. But they drank. Most of them rarely or never became quite intoxicated, of course. But drinking was an accepted, thoroughly understood fact of their lives; almost as much a fact as eating. And, of her friends, the women drank quite as much, as a matter of course, as did the men. It was one of the things to do. They "controlled" themselves, yet not to drink was not to be thought of. They

leaned upon the stimulation. When they visited each other they had it, as a matter of course. Why not? Everybody drank! How ridiculous not to have drink for one's friends!

So my wife was compelled to remain apart from her friends in New York. She understood her own case perfectly well. She was what the medical men who are experts on alcoholic addiction term the "true dipsomaniac," to differentiate between this type and the type of dipsomaniacs who are more or less wantonly so. With the true dipsomaniac, the impulse to drink is a mental tornado. It is irresistible. Nothing stands before it; no consideration of consequences past or to come. It does not come frequently; there is no steady, gnawing craving for drink; but when it does come, the victim, unless restrained by a force outside of himself, gives way, goes down; there is no power of self-restraint that he can depend upon; that has been taken away from him, if, indeed, he ever had it.

My case was wholly different. By long, steady indulgence, I had created a craving for liquor that became, at times, insupportably difficult to control. I had, of course, a powerful predisposition for drink. My life history already had sufficiently proved that. But I had pampered, nurtured, built up the appetite by indulgence until it had become a thing to be reckoned with.

By tremendous efforts I could hold myself in leash, could resist. But it is a grisly, a depleting, thing to have to fight such an enemy all the time. It wears you down. When your nerves are poisoned with alcohol, it is too much to ask that you synchronously possess good spirits, any fair amount of sustaining exuberance, and so your battle against the built-up appetite must be carried on low-spiritedly, grimly, grayly, for the reason that while the fight is on you are not accessible to such inspiration as might be derived from healthy nerves, from a mind unused to stimulation and therefore amenable to the promptings of a normal state of well-being. It is a gloomy battle back to normality.

But we were fighting. We faced the facts, and we fought. It was, I think, remarkable, considering our youth, that we recognized the situation so clearly. But we did. We knew how gravely, vitally necessary it was that we take no chances. We shrank from the perils. Each of us, both of us, dreaded the thought of a fall. We knew how to appraise our weakness, we knew how not to be overconfident of our strength.

So we were, in a way of speaking, penned up. We must, as a couple, remain absolutely outside the drink atmosphere. There could be no drink in our home, even for visitors, and so there could be few or no visitors. We must keep away from all places where drink was. It was a problem; it was a task.

It was, of course, impossible for me to keep out of the drink atmosphere. My fight had to be made in the open. My office associates, most of them twice and some of them thrice my age, were of the type of men of affairs who drank heavily, and a great many men of affairs did so drink in the early nineties. These were of the hard-drinking Wall Street lot of that day. They would have Gargantuan lunches, with champagne. A cocktail or a whisky and soda was as frequent and as unconsidered a matter with them as their use of the handkerchief. In their sumptuous offices they had great cabinets stocked with all sorts of liquors, even wines, for friends who dropped in upon them.

This was the sort of thing I had to withstand. I had never before, since beginning to drink, put any check upon my appetite for liquor. When I wanted

it, I had taken it, and all I wanted of it. Now I must take none—not one drink! I must sit, outwardly cool, with the fumes of it, the suggestiveness of it, hitting me with crushing, bewildering impact, and leave it utterly alone.

There were times when the sweat would break out on me with the agony of resistance. It is so easy to get into that condition; it is so hard to get out of it. Of my own volition and determination, I had set myself the craggy job of getting out of that state. There was now something else to uphold me besides my own mere volition and resolution—the love of a woman, the need to stay right that she might remain right. *Had it not been for this, I am* very sure now that I should not have been able to stand up during those months under the heavy assaults of the enemy.

There were cold, lowering evenings when, after leaving the elevated train, I would run—literally run—to the apartment on Central Park West.

I would hurry swiftly to the apartment to make *sure*. Then my relief would be so great that it would leave me limp. Yes, everything was all right. She would greet me—beautiful, a little wistful at times, but glad of my companionship, of my safety. I had beaten down temptation, everything was right with her; another day of the fight won!

It was asking a good deal of two young people that they maintain their balance, living that kind of a life of strained, ceaseless vigilance, of dread and anxiety—asking a good deal.

It worried me, of course, that with all of these barriers erected of necessity around us, my wife could get so little out of life. She knew the need for the barriers; she had helped to build them; they formed the stockade from the shelter of which she was struggling to hold the enemy at bay. She made no complaints, never alluded to the enforced social inadequacy of our way of living. She bravely confronted the fact that she was an equal sharer in our mutual fight, and she took her place on the firing line of her own destiny.

But she was a woman, and fighting is not a woman's game.

She must of necessity be alone a great part of the time, and for company she had virtually only me. I felt from the start that this part of the method had a poor chance to work out; but what else to do? It was an arrangement prompted by the exigency of the situation; she herself had so established it; but it could endure, I feared, only by a miracle. She was used to the company of the cleverest of men and *women. True, there had been times* when their company had cost her dear —but she was used to it; it had been part of her life. Now she had scarcely any company. When I was away from the apartment, she was thrust back upon herself. The man making such a fight may often forget it during his working hours, may keep its imminence fended by plunging into a thousand activities, getting into a clinch with absorbing affairs, grappling with the naked need to hold his end up, to play the game among his fellows.

But the woman with such a fight on her hands has no such means of forgetting its asperities. She must fight at home. And home hours without companionship are long hours. She was thrust back upon herself, with the irksome, undismissible memory of weaknesses in her past that were injurious to think about, with the wearing, unbanishable knowledge that she was engaged in a fight that was merely beginning.

She never, I repeat, made any mention of these things. I could only guess what might be in her mind, using what was in my own for standard of comparison; but my guess was not wrong, and I was oppressed all the time with the certainty that it was not wrong.

We had been six months in New York. On Thanksgiving Day, I remained at home. In the evening she came to me—I was reading in the little library—with a question in her eyes.

"Cook has made a sad mess of the turkey," she said. "It burned black while she was gossiping in the hall. She is crying her eyes out, poor dear, so I cannot scold her."

I waited. Of course we should have to have a dinner of some sort.

"What do you say, Richard, if we dine out this evening? We might go to Sherry's."

I drew her down to the arm of my chair, and waited a little longer.

"It will be perfectly all right for this once, I think, dear," she said, interpreting my silence. "And we have been such hermits, haven't we?"

I was glad of the suggestion. It seemed to denote that she had got past the stage of fear. I hoped it did. And it would be a treat to dine out. She was a rarely beautiful woman, she knew how to dress, she had wonderful clothes, and—vanity of a boy!—it had been a hardship that I could not exhibit her, feel publicly the glow and glory of possessing her.

I might have been a dotard with a blooming, new, young wife, I was so inordinately proud of her at the restaurant. She wore a dazzlingly becoming dress, something cream-colored, spangled from neck to waist with silver, and a great picture hat of the sort then in vogue. I had never seen her so lovely. The polite eyes of a characteristic Sherry crowd of diners waited their moment to scan her appraisingly. She knew many people at the tables; some of them came to our table to greet her.

We had been penned up. The lights, the table flowers, the subdued music, the gay chatter—these things were a little disturbing. And everybody was taking wine with the food, of course. The air was redolent of wine. At near-by tables we could see the very beads winking at the brims of thin-stemmed glasses.

Her appetite deserted her before our dinner was served, and she grew pale. She was biting her under lip in the old way, and, though the room was very warm, she shivered. I was not hungry. A cocktail or two before the food would have whipped up appetite, would have relaxed the strain. But, cocktailless of course, I began stolidly, by an effort, to eat. Soon, however, I became alarmed. I had surmised that the old desire had suddenly swept her. But I had not supposed it could affect her to the verge of an actual congestive chill in a warm room.

"Shall we be going?" I asked her. She nodded. Her features were drawn with the intensity of the onset and the struggle.

So we returned to the apartment. She suffered through the night with a raging headache.

"I must not attempt anything like that again for a long, long time," she said to me in the morning. "It is too trying. I must wait until it is no longer trying. How long do you suppose that will be, dear?"

It was a very wistful, a very sad sort of a question, I thought. But I could make no reply to it. I could venture no guess at how long it might be.

I did not tell her that at the restaurant my own internal clamor for some of the drink which was on all sides of us had caused what little food I had eaten to stick sorely in my throat. Probably she surmised that. But her own trouble was great enough without being told.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE JUNE 7TH POPULAR.

Quien Sabe

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "The Amazing Tenderfoot," "Sunny Mateel," Etc.

The part taken in the Teller feud by a dog who was half Airedale and half shepherd, and whose owner reckoned he'd give her away or shoot her, for she was "no good with the sheep"

WHEN Dick Hardin, the deputy, got word that the old Teller feud had flamed up again, and that Rube Teller had passed his word in public to "get" Jimmy Davis, Hardin saddled his buckskin, rode over to the sheriff's office, and told the sheriff that Jimmy Davis was a friend of his. The sheriff nodded. "Teller?" he queried. Dick Hardin nodded in reply. That was all. Neither needed further enlightenment.

Hardin knew that the sheep were drifting toward the railroad towns. Jimmy Davis was probably with his sheep. So Hardin headed for Long Cañon, riding slowly, but without waste of time. Water holes were far between in the cañon, and the river had dried up. The first night he camped alone, manipulated an empty tomato can, in which he made coffee, and fried bacon on a pointed stick. The buckskin, hobbled, grazed round the fire. Hardin knew his horse, and, better still, the horse knew Hardin. They had covered many trails together.

Now, Hardin had a stiff problem to solve. He knew that his friend, Jimmy Davis, would give him anything he had, even to the last lamb in his flock; but he also knew that Jimmy would never give his consent to official interference in the feud. It was a matter of pride with the Davis boys that each handled his end of the feud alone. There had been Bob, killed in the brush, and found by the brothers several days later. Then the other brother, Walt, meeting up with Rube Teller, had downed his man, but not until he was himself mortally wounded. This left Rube and his brother Steve to get Jimmy; and Rube had advertised the fact that he was going to get him. Hardin worried over manifold schemes to help Jimmy, but none seemed feasible. Finally he determined to hunt up his friend and warn him. That was the best, the most that he could do.

Next morning, he saddled, and had a foot in the stirrup, when he saw a canvas-topped freight wagon pulling in to the water hole. He delayed starting. The wagon lumbered in. The driver and his companion were strangers to Hardin, but they greeted him warmly. They were not familiar with the cañon and its many roads and trails. Was he going through? Yes? They would be glad to have him accompany them. He was more than welcome to sleep and eat with them. Hardin, naturally silent, simply reined his pony round and waited while they watered the horses. Then he drifted along beside them. They were hunters, going in for two weeks.

Toward evening of that day, Hardin spurred ahead, advising them to keep to the upper road and not to attempt the short cut along the cañon bed. With Hardin's disappearance, and the knowledge that the next water was several

miles ahead, they decided to take the lower road. They struck heavy sand, realized their mistake, and, in attempting to turn and pull out of it, broke the reach of the wagon. Meanwhile, Hardin jogged along. The sun disappeared abruptly. The cañon grew cold. Hardin, riding across a level stretch of upland, saw, far to the left, a tiny blaze. Immediately he reined his horse toward the dot of light. The buckskin stepped briskly, anticipating camp.

Dropping down to the next level, Hardin peered ahead. He saw a notch in the cañon wall, and rode toward it. Down the steep trail he put his horse, entered the heavy sand of the river bed, and caught the glimmer of water. Then he knew that the camp across the cañon was a sheep camp. Halfway across the river bed he was met by a tall, dimly outlined figure.

"Hello, Jimmy!" he said.

The figure strode toward him.

"How, Dick!"

It was typical of both that neither said anything further. Jimmy shuffled through the sand to the opposite bank of the cañon, and Hardin followed, head bent, and sitting forward in the saddle. At the camp, Hardin dismounted, and hobbled his horse. Jimmy simply gestured toward the fire, and the Mexican boy got busy with the Dutch oven.

They talked sheep, grazing, and kindred topics for a while. The dogs, curling close to the fire, dozed and twitched. "Three dogs?" queried Hardin, indicating a big, shaggy, nondescript dog sleeping apart from the others.

"That's Quien Sabe," replied Jimmy. "She's half Airedale and half sheep dog. She's no good with the sheep. Reckoned I'd give her away, or shoot her. She eats more than the other two together."

Hardin smiled. "Quien Sabe?" he reiterated. "Some name." He studied the dog, noting her well-muscled flanks and strong shoulders and forelegs. The Airedale strain was apparent in her bobbed tail and the wiry coat. The shepherd was manifest in her ears and head. Hardin had never owned a dog, for obvious reasons. A deputy sheriff, if ordinarily busy, has no time to bother with a dog. He thought it would be a pity to shoot the animal. She was evidently young, and had an intelligent head and face. He called to her, and she came, wagging her stump of a tail, and questioning him with nose and eyes. He patted her head and spoke a word or two to her. Quien Sabe seemed to realize that that was all required of her just then, so she turned and resumed her place by the fire, but away from the other dogs, whose heads dropped back to their paws as they also realized they were not wanted.

Round about, the sheep blatted and shuffled. It was a new camp, and they were restless. Finally, as Hardin was about to turn in, he made excuse to borrow an extra sheepskin, and drew close to Jimmy. "Rube Teller is talking again," was all that he said. Jimmy nodded, and called attention to the new moon just rising above the cañon rim. Hardin slept well until, late that night, he heard the dogs barking. He raised his head and listened. Across the cañon lumbered the freight wagon, and he could hear the hunters as they called to the horses, urging them on.

In the chill of the dawn, Hardin arose, and squatted by the fire for his coffee, tortillas, and meat. Then he saddled up and led his horse to where Jimmy was untangling a mess of pack saddles and ropes. "Give me the dog," said Hardin.

Jimmy glanced up. "Take her. Better put your rope on her till you get her used to you. She's only been here three days. A Mexican gave her to me. Reckon he was glad to get shut of feeding her."

"All right. Adios!"

"Adios, amigo!"

And Hardin rode across the cañon bed and up the notch. By noon he had overtaken the hunters, and jogged along with them the rest of the hundred and twenty miles.

When he arrived at the Teller Ranch, he inquired for Rube, and was told that he was plowing north of the pasture. Hardin rode over to the field, hailed Rube, and, dismounting, squatted beside the team with him. They talked weather and crop conditions, water and grazing. Finally Hardin rose. "Just rode up to see how you were making it," he said. "I saw Jimmy Davis as I came up."

Rube Teller glanced away, and then back at Hardin. The latter smiled. "I'm keeping my eye on Jimmy," he said. "So long, Rube."

"So long," grumbled Teller. "I'm stayin' awake myself."

Quien Sabe, now assured that her new master was *the* man she had been looking for, frisked round the buckskin, trotted back to Teller and smelled of him, and then leaped to follow Hardin as he rode down the plowed field. It had amused the deputy to notice that she had sat with vigilant eye fixed on Teller during the conversation. When Hardin made his return trip down the cañon, he noticed that the sheep had been moved. Nor did he see Jimmy Davis again, save one evening on the mesa, and later in Lorita.

When word came to the sheriff that Jimmy Davis had disappeared, he sent for Hardin. "Guess Rube got him, Dick."

Hardin frowned. "Seen the Mexicans?"

"The herder brought the news. Said Jimmy took his rifle and went out after rabbits. Didn't come back. They searched for him down the cañon and up on the mesa. What do *you* think?"

"Teller," said Hardin. "I'll be back in a couple of days."

With the deputy went Quien Sabe, romping along, and diving into the brush at intervals to chase a jack rabbit. Arrived at the abandoned sheep camp, Hardin called to the dog: "Here, Quien, get busy!"

She leaped at him playfully, but he thrust her down. Finally she nosed about camp, caught Jimmy's old trail, and followed it. For two hours, Hardin twisted and turned, battling through the greasewood. Presently he stooped and picked up an empty thirty-thirty shell. Quien Sabe, running back, waited for him, and then took the trail, nose down, and exceedingly busy. For a moment he lost sight of her; then he heard a long, soul-reaching howl. He stepped forward and parted the brush. Jimmy Davis lay where Teller's bullet had found him, face down. Tied to his worn belt were two rabbits. His saddle gun lay beside him. In the chamber was an exploded shell. Hardin stooped and turned the body over. Then he called to the dog.

Hardin was naturally silent, cool, and ordinarily undisturbed by such events. In this instance, however, he felt that Jimmy's death was a personal matter with him. He went back for his horse, and roped the body across the saddle. Late that night he entered Lorita and routed out the sheriff. In the office, they gazed at Jimmy and then at each other. Suddenly Hardin whipped the badge from his shirt and handed it to the sheriff. "I'll take it again, if you want to give it to me when I'm through —with this," he said, gesturing toward the body.

To Hardin's surprise, the sheriff put out his hand. "Shake, Dick! And go to it! Only, wait for your excuse. Jimmy was worth the whole Teller tribe. And don't get careless. Rube's got a shifty hand."

For answer, Hardin pulled out his

revolver, spun the cylinder, and, dropping off his cartridge belt, tucked the gun in the waistband of his pants. Then he went to his home and slept, dressed. In the morning, he sauntered into the saloon and chatted with the saloon keeper. He drifted out again and up the street. Every horseman riding into town was inspected with a keen glance. Hardin figured that Rube Teller, if he had shot Davis, would not hide out, but rather ride in and manifest surprise at the killing. That was the Teller way —as it was their way to shoot from the brush. "This time," argued Hardin, "Rube'll have to blow smoke in daylight."

And Rube Teller rode into town. It was noon, and the streets were aglare with the sunlight on the white dust. Hardin, as Teller passed him, nodded. Rube turned to gaze at the deputy. There was something peculiar about Hardin. Rube wondered what it was, and finally, recalling every detail of the other's dress, remembered that the deputy's badge seemed missing. Rube had often thought what a good mark that badge would make, worn, as it had been, on Hardin's shirt, a little above his heart. Teller began to think hard. He reined up, and, dismounting, entered the saloon. A little later, Hardin strolled in, followed by Quien Sabe. The dog sniffed at the legs of the men at the bar, and stopped as she came to Teller. Some one was recounting the finding of Davis' body in the brush. Rube Teller seemed sympathetically interested. With Hardin's arrival came a silence. Some one noticed the dog standing back of Teller, and mentioned it. Teller turned. Quien Sabe was gazing up at him with glittering eyes.

"Jimmy's dog," said Hardin, as though in answer to the silence.

"Thought it was your dog," said Teller.

"Jimmy gave her to me."

"Ornery-lookin' cur," said Teller, eying Hardin.

"Yes," said Hardin. "But she knows her business. She found Jimmy."

"So? Where was that?"

"Right where you shot him," said Hardin. And, as Rube's hand flashed to his belt, Quien Sabe, leaping from her haunches, snapped at his arm. Hardin shot from the hip, once. Teller staggered back, clutched at the bar, and slid to the floor. Quien Sabe lay across him, shot through the body. Hardin holstered his gun and walked to where Teller lay. The men gathered round, muttering, and shuffling their feet. Some one shook hands with Hardin, who seemed dazed. "It's all over," said a friend, his hand on Hardin's arm. Hardin turned on him: "That don't worry me—it's the dog!" And he stooped and stroked Quien Sabe's head. The dog quivered, and opened her eyes. "By thunder! She's alive—and a hole through her!" said one.

Hardin lifted the inert form of Quien Sabe and carried her out, and down to the sheriff's office. Then he went for the doctor. "And get a move!" he told the doctor, who threw some things in his bag and hastened after Hardin.

"Where you headed for, Dick?" he queried.

"The office. Come on!"

"Why, I thought Teller was in the saloon!"

"He is—he don't need you. I do!"

Quien Sabe, by a miracle, pulled through. When Hardin left Lorita, he took her with him. On his ranch in California, over Tulare way, she runs with the buckskin when Hardin goes to town. In the evenings, when the heat of the day has passed to the pleasant coolness of starlit dusk, Hardin often calls Quien Sabe to him. On her collar is a brass plate with her name. "He was mighty quick," Hardin will say to her. "If you hadn't jumped in—Quien Sabe? Who knows?"

Stories of the Legion

By H. De Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Gold Trail," "The Buccaneers," Etc.

III.—SCHNEIDER

STORIES about the Foreign Legion have, nearly all, the same central idea and motive—escape or attempted escape.

It is the one thing the Légionnaires think of. They grumble about their food; they grumble about their chief officers and their subordinate officers; they grumble about the hot days and cold nights of Algeria; they grumble about the scarcity of cigarettes, the price of wine, the scarcity of soap, the hardness of their work, the smallness of their pay, but they never grumble about their loss of liberty.

They dream about it.

It is the one idea around which all other ideas revolve, and it is kept alive and active less perhaps by the general hardness of life in the Legion than by the fact that escape is, though seemingly feasible, next to impossible.

No man can buy his discharge from the Legion. No man, once he has signed the fatal paper, can escape from the consequences of his act by influence. You may be the son of a prince—it does not matter, or of a Rockefeller—it does not matter, you have to dree your weird for five years and carry your rifle and knapsack under the blazing sun to the last day of your term of enlistment.

After all, you have signed a contract and signed it with your eyes open, and should you fight against fate and try to break your contract, you find that the system you are struggling with has provided against that.

Twenty thousand men or so distributed in Algeria, Indo-China, and Morocco, and most of them willing to escape on the slightest chance, require a pretty definite and complete system of restraint.

Corporal Radoub—it was just before he was made sergeant—had very clear views on this matter. Bitter personal experience had convinced him of the futility of all attempts at evasion. Where he had failed, he could not see the chance of any one else succeeding. Nor did he wish any one else to succeed. Such a success would have cast extra discredit on his own attempt, an attempt that was fast fading from the memory of the regiment, but not from the memory of Corporal Radoub.

One bright morning, Radoub, who had returned to the barrack yard with his squad after three hours' practice on the ranges, turned from lighting a cigarette to watch the arrival of a column of recruits just arrived from France by way of Oran.

There were forty men in the column, men of all heights and ages, all nationalities, a sinister-looking crowd, dusty, tattered, limping, many of them most evidently underfed, and nearly all of them wearing that look of dejection common to lost dogs and lost men.

Most of these new recruits had

This series began in the April 20th POPULAR.

joined the Legion to escape starvation; a few were of the active criminal type and had evidently been given the choice of the Legion or the penitentiary. Radoub's keen eyes sorted them out and classified them at once, but there was one man he could not classify, a man of middle height, dark, clean shaven, youthful, and of military bearing.

This person's clothes, though dusty, were well cut, and his boots, of brown tan leather, were a marvel.

He carried himself easily, with an air of indifference and detachment, as though he were a spectator and not a member of this little company of tragic actors, and when the recruits were dismissed to find their quarters, he lit a cigarette before going to the depot to receive his uniform.

Radoub felt interested in this individual. Here was most evidently a man of superior birth, an aristocrat strayed into the trap of the Legion. Every now and then the net closes on a gorgeous bird of this description. Radoub knew the type and despised it; the young man of good birth gone wrong was, in his experience, a person to be avoided; he had had his soap stolen by a Viennese banker's son, and he had been badly treated financially—it was a matter of five francs—by a gentleman with manicured nails and no money morals, who had the reputation of being a count in his own country—though what that country was no man knew.

But the present specimen was different somehow from the others; as far as one could judge by appearances, and Radoub, falling into talk with him, showed him the way to the depot and then to the dormitory allotted to him.

No place in the world is kept more spick and span than the great barracks of the Foreign Legion. It vies with an English lighthouse or an English man-of-war in the polish of its brasses and the neatness of its poor appointments.

The dormitory to which Radoub led the newcomer had the appearance of a hospital ward. There were twenty beds, and every bed, except one or two that were vacant, had a card with a Légionnaire's name and number.

"Here you are," said Radoub. "You can choose your bed from those three near the door; shuffle into your uniform and you can sell your old togs; you won't want them for another five years, and the fashions will have altered by then."

He showed the newcomer, who was carrying all his kit and accouterments in a huge bundle, how to stow away his things, gave him a few hints as to what to avoid if he wished for a peaceable life, and took his departure.

The newcomer's name was Schneider. At least, that was the name he had joined under—a German name—yet he spoke French like a Frenchman.

Radoub saw him next on the drill ground, and noticed that he wore his uniform as though born in it. They had thrown him out of the instructional squad, finding that he was as well up in the business of drill as the oldest Légionnaire, and he was attached to Company No. 4, practicing the double with the great column round and round the vast drill ground.

From the very first moment Schneider took his place in the Legion as a person to be respected. He had not sold his clothes. They, and the wonderful tan boots, he had given away to be sold, and he had never asked for the money. He had plenty of money.

The Legion, though recruited from the ranks of the broken down, the criminal, and the starving, is a regiment of dudes. After the main ambition to escape comes the ambition to outvie one's neighbor in cleanliness and neatness. This desire to be neat, to be bright and speckless, is stimulated by the laws of the Legion that bear with terrible severity upon slackers. All the same, it is

a true desire, a true ambition born of the spirit of the Legion, that strange spirit of the mass which ever affects and bends the individuality of the unit.

Schneider was such a dude that he manicured his nails. Having plenty of money, he was able to pay for services. The Légionnaires' undress uniform is of white cotton cloth; it has to be washed nearly every day. Schneider never washed his uniform; he paid another man to do that job. The polishing of the metal work of his equipment and the cleaning of his rifle never occupied his time; a brother Légionnaire did all this for him—at a price.

Consequently he could keep his hands clean, and his evenings were free. He spent his evenings mostly in Sidi-bel-Abbès, in the Place Sidi Carnot, listening to the band, or in one of the better-class cafés unapproachable to the ordinary Légionnaire on account of the prices charged—thirty centimes for a cigar, half a franc for a vermuth, and so forth.

Radoub sometimes saw Schneider seated before one of these cafés reading the *Journal d'Oran* and sipping his wine. Radoub, who had taken an interest in the man at first sight, found, as time went on, that his interest was steadily growing. He watched him as a cat watches a mouse.

He could not make him out at all. Here was a man most evidently of good birth, a man possessing money, and, more than that, a man who evidently kept up correspondence with his people—for Schneider received a good many letters—living the slave life of a Légionnaire. Had he committed some crime? If so, why did he keep up this large correspondence? He was not of the criminal type, and, although men of the ordinary type often do commit crimes, Radoub felt instinctively that Schneider was not held in the Legion by fear of the law.

There were other points of interest about this person. Without being in the least offensive in his manner, he managed to keep others at a distance; he talked with any one who chose to talk to him, yet he made no friend; doing his duties well and without any sign of distaste, he yet always gave the impression of a mechanism without any soul in the business on hand. He never grumbled were the practice march ever so long or the sun ever so hot on the drill ground. He seemed quite content, in a fatalistic sort of way, with his lot, and Radoub might have left the matter at that and lost interest in him had not Schneider one day chosen to make him his friend.

It was six months after the latter had joined; and one morning, after parade, Schneider, producing a packet of cigarettes, offered one to Radoub.

"They aren't very good, but they are better than the Algerian stuff," said Schneider.

Radoub, lighting up, assented, and the two men strolled back to the barracks, talking of indifferent matters, till, just as they were parting at the door of the depot, Radoub said:

"You aren't German, are you?"

Schneider laughed.

"No," said he. "I am not German. I am an Austrian—but I will tell you about that some day."

Next evening they met in the town, and Schneider stood Radoub a bottle of wine. It was the beginning of a friendship that was to last some months—a warm friendship, at least on the part of Radoub, who found himself actually caring less for Schneider's money or his wine than his companionship. Schneider, now that the ice was thawed, exhibited an interest in the Legion and its history in strong contrast with his general air of disinterest in everything. More especially did he ask questions about men who had tried to make their escape, their methods and their chances.

"*Mon Dieu,*" would reply Radoub, "there's not a chance; not one in a thousand has ever done it." He went into the subject from the circumference to the center, and in the manner of an expert. He showed how the boats were guarded at Oran, how the railway line was watched and the roads patrolled.

"And how about escaping by way of the interior?" asked Schneider.

Radoub laughed, and gave examples of men who had tried that business and their horrible fate.

"It's a fool's game," said he, "however you take it. But why do you talk of it so much? Do you want to escape?"

"Not I," said Schneider. "I am as happy here as anywhere else. I am interested in the subject, that is all."

But despite his interest in the subject, he did not refer to it again; but it seemed to Radoub for a moment, as they returned to barracks, that under the calm and listless demeanor of his friend there lay an uneasy spirit, the spirit of the slave that has sold himself into slavery and who has awakened to the galling of his chains.

Then he dismissed the subject from his mind. Schneider seemed contented; and if he did want to escape, he would without doubt have told the fact to his one friend in the Legion—Radoub.

One day, some two months later, Schneider took Radoub aside.

"You have asked me once or twice," said he, "about my nationality and the place where I came from. I told you I was an Austrian, and that was the truth. I am, in fact, a Viennese. My family is one of the oldest in Austria, and I left my home and forsook my position on account of an unfortunate love affair. You are my friend, and so I tell you this, trusting that you will keep my secret."

Radoub, greatly flattered by the confidence of the other, swore eternal secrecy, and Schneider went on.

"The girl I loved," said he, "was my equal socially; young, charming, wealthy, she had discarded the attentions of half Vienna, had chosen me just as I had chosen her, by that instantaneous power of selection which love alone bestows."

"*Oui, oui,*" said Radoub, scarcely understanding all this, and quite at a loss before the melodramatic language of the other, who, in fact, seemed reciting some passage out of a cheap novel rather than some experience from his own life.

"Everything went well," continued Schneider, "till one fatal day we quarreled."

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" said Radoub. "You quarreled. And what did you quarrel about?"

"That I cannot tell you," replied Schneider. "It is a matter I do not care to refer to; it is sufficient that we quarreled. I could not endure life any longer. I left my country, and, seeking an active life, I came here."

"You certainly have got what you came to look for," said Radoub. "And what has become of her—does she know where you are?"

"My friend," said Schneider, "not only does she know where I am, but she is at the present moment in Sidi-bel-Abbès."

"In Sidi-bel-Abbès?"

"Yes. She is staying at the Hôtel d'Oran; she has written to me, and wishes to see me."

"And are you going?"

"No, I am not going," said Schneider. "Never again shall I see her."

"Ah, *mon Dieu,*" said Radoub, "think twice about that. Never is a long day. Come, see her and make it up; you have only four years and a bit to serve before getting your discharge, and then you can marry her."

"I will not see her," replied Schneider; "it is useless to speak of it. But I want you as a friend to do some-

thing for me. I wish to write to her. I have written to her, in fact, and here is the letter. Will you take it to her? You know, at the military post, here, they sometimes open letters; at least, so it is said. I want you to give it into her own hands."

"I will do it," said Radoub. He took the letter and put it in his pocket—there was no address upon it. "And for whom shall I ask at the Hôtel d'Oran?"

"Madame Seraskier."

"Madame Seraskier?"

"Yes, that is her mother; she is staying there with her mother, so you must ask for the elder lady. Madame Seraskier knows all about this business, so you need not hesitate to hand the letter to Mademoiselle Seraskier in her presence."

"I will do it," said Radoub.

He got an hour's leave that afternoon, and started off for Sidi-bel-Abbès.

Sidi-bel-Abbès is slashed across, like a hot-cross bun, by two boulevards, one running north and south, the other east and west. The Hôtel d'Oran is situated near the junction of these boulevards; and when Radoub arrived there, he found, after numerous inquiries, that Madame Seraskier was at home. I say numerous inquiries, for in the hotels of Sidi-bel-Abbès nobody seems to know anything about anything. The Arab kef seems to have stolen into the mental atmosphere of the business world; nobody seems capable of exertion or surprise; and if you were to ask the lady clerk of the Hôtel d'Oran, as she sits in her glass-fronted office: "Madame, has a dromedary gone upstairs?" I am perfectly sure she would reply, without even raising those jet-black eyebrows of hers: "Monsieur, I do not know, but I will ask." Radoub was shown up to the first floor and into a private sitting room, where an old lady and a young lady were seated, one reading a novel, and the other writing a letter.

He told of his mission, with military brevity, and stood while the young woman opened and read through the letter.

His mission was over with its delivery, yet he waited, scarcely knowing why, half expecting that some verbal message would be given to him, half held, perhaps, by his interest in the girl, who was very good looking, yet spoiled in his eyes by a businesslike and decided manner evident in every movement.

"Thank you," said Mademoiselle Seraskier, as she finished reading and handed the letter to the elder woman. "It is most good of you to have brought this. There is no reply."

"No reply?" said Radoub. He was thinking, if this were so, everything was indeed up with this unfortunate love affair, and his interest in his good friend Schneider made him bold.

"You will excuse me, mademoiselle," said he; "I am only a common soldier, and Monsieur Schneider is a gentleman, as is easily to be seen. Still, he is my friend, and the welfare of my friend touches me. He has been in the Legion some months, now, and he stands the life all right; but it is in another six months or a year that the harness will begin to rub. I know, for I have seen it in many a man like him. The Legion tells; and the more a gentleman a man is, the sooner it breaks him. Then he goes 'cafard' and shoots some one, or else he tries to escape and gets hauled back. All this happens unless he has some interest outside the Legion to hold him back and keep him quiet."

Radoub paused. He was a very blunt-speaking person, and his shyness before the ladies was dissipated by the sound of his own voice; besides, he had a purpose.

"Monsieur Schneider has told me the whole affair," he resumed. "He has

quarreled with you, and will not make it up. Well, do not mind him; give him another six months of drill and route marching, and he will sing another tune. If you care for him, mademoiselle, as a woman ought to care for a man, don't regard his tantrums, and keep on writing to him, even if he tears up your letters."

The effect of this speech was astonishing. Mademoiselle Seraskier, after looking at Radoub for a moment with eyes dancing with merriment, suddenly turned and ran from the room. She seemed choking with laughter, and the incensed Radoub was turning to go when the old lady held him.

"Do not mind my daughter," said she. "She is young, and young people are sometimes foolish. Meanwhile, take my thanks for your kindness, and as a small memento of our meeting please accept this."

She took a pink-and-blue five-hundred-franc note from a traveling desk open on the table and approached Radoub with it.

"Madame," said Radoub, "I do not take money for assisting my friends." He saluted, turned on his heel, and departed.

It was magnificent. Five hundred francs, to a Légionnaire, is the equivalent of five thousand francs to an ordinary civilian, and he had flung it back in the faces of these people—really in the face of this girl, who had laughed at his friend. He came down the stairs, swelling out his chest, and with the feeling of a man who has cast everything away but honor. Then, in the street outside, and all of a sudden, his splendor of mind faded and shriveled up.

In a practical world, where cigarettes were three sous a packet, he had flung away five hundred francs. Five Napoleons!

He stopped and actually retraced his steps for a pace or two; then he resumed his way to the barracks, furious with himself, with Schneider, Madame Seraskier, Mademoiselle Seraskier, and the universe in general. He saw Schneider that evening, and told him that he had delivered the letter; and Schneider not making any inquiries, he said nothing more. He felt illogically angry with Schneider, so much so that he borrowed five francs from him.

II.

Next night, at the time when all good Légionnaires should be in barracks, Schneider failed to answer the roll call.

In such a case, the Legion officials, disregarding the half dozen different causes that may make a man break his leave, look upon him as a deserter.

By midnight, Schneider's description had been telegraphed to Oran, eighty miles away, and the railway officials and road patrols notified, also the Arab police.

Schneider did not turn up next morning. He had deserted, or else he was dead.

Radoub believed that he must have done away with himself. Schneider, being his friend, would have told him had he intended to make his escape. Then there was a matter of the letter to the girl, a farewell letter. Yes, there could be no doubt—he had committed suicide, and was hidden away in some ditch somewhere.

He mourned for his friend all day, and in the evening, strolling into the town, he spent five centimes on the *Journal d'Oran,* thinking there might be some news of his vanished friend. Later on, he strolled into the shop of a friend of his, Moccata by name, a Jew clothier, rag and rubbish dealer, and fence.

I do not accuse Radoub of using Moccata in the latter capacity. I simply state the fact that this gentleman was a fence; he was also a most pic-

turesque individual, with the gray beard of a prophet.

Radoub had come to ask him his opinion of the Schneider business.

"The man has made his escape," said Moccata, "without any manner of doubt —you are quite wrong. If he had committed suicide, the body would have been found. Bless you, there's no hiding anything away in Sidi-bel-Abbès, what with the police always hunting for runaways and criminals, and the Arab boys poking about in every lane and ditch for bits of old metal and rubbish. Ah, ha!"

He struck himself on the knee, as though he had remembered something all of a sudden. Then he rose up and went into a corner of the shop, searched among the rubbish there, and produced a bundle.

He unrolled it, exposing a blue full-dress Légionnaire's coat, red trousers, and sash.

"I was coming home last night," said Moccata, "with a sack containing some old clothes, when I stumbled against a bundle. It was in the lane opening from Mustapha Street; the things were rolled up and tied together with the sash. I popped them in the sack. It was stupid of me to touch them. You know the law is heavy on any one helping a Légionnaire to escape, and to be in possession of a Légionnaire's uniform might cast suspicion on one; but, to tell the truth, my friend, I could not let the things lie; all my life I have been dealing in old clothes; it is not the profit I make from them, but the feeling I have for them that prevents me from leaving even an old hat lying in the street if I can pick it up. My father dealt in old clothes before me, and his father before him; it runs in the family. So there you are. I picked the things up; I could not let them lie. And now I do not know what to do with them."

"You had better hide them," said Radoub. Then he went off.

There was no doubt in his mind now. Schneider was not dead; he had escaped. The only thing to account for a uniform cast away like that was an escaped Légionnaire, and no other Légionnaire had escaped or attempted escape.

Schneider had been playing a part all along. Radoub, as he walked back to the barracks, revolved matters in his mind. He remembered how, several months ago, Schneider had suddenly made friends with him; he remembered those conversations about escape, and he saw how artfully this scamp had pumped him on the matter. Then came the question of the girl.

The girl and the old lady had come to Sidi-bel-Abbès to help in the business, and he blushed to think of the part he, Radoub, had played; he remembered that speech of his, honest and spoken from the heart, and the way in which the girl had received it, rushing from the room to hide her merriment, and, remembering this, Radoub swore a great oath to be revenged. Schneider had played him false; that was bad. He had placed him in a ridiculous position; that was worse.

Then, as he drew near the barrack gate, an idea struck him. He went straight to the officers' quarters, and the colonel happening to be in, Radoub had a five minutes' interview with him.

At ten minutes past ten, he left the colonel, carrying with him a written order that made him virtual master of all the outlets of Algeria; he went to his room, fetched his blue overcoat, and, going to the garage, secured a motor car. A few minutes later, he was being driven to Oran, where he arrived early in the morning.

He went to the police bureau, and found that the boat for Marseilles was due to start at nine o'clock; and at eight o'clock he had taken his stand on the quay close to the gangway of the steamer.

It was the ill-fated *General Chanzy,* and the last of the cargo was going on board to the tune of the winch pawls and the shouting of the red-fezzed negro stevedores. The quay presented a brilliant spectacle beneath the intense blue of the morning sky; a company of Spahis, bound for Senegal, were lining up by the troopship that was to take them; the crying of the Arab children at play answered the crying of the gulls fishing in the harbor, and here came the first of the passengers for the Marseilles boat, a stout, bearded Frenchman, who might have been Tartarin of Tarascon himself, in tweeds, wearing a sun helmet and followed by two negro porters carrying his luggage. After him came a French family, two American ladies in blue veils; then came some Germans, and lastly what Radoub was waiting for.

Madame Seraskier, Mademoiselle Seraskier, and their maid. The women were all veiled, and the maid was carrying a dressing bag. There was no sign of Schneider. Radoub was not looking for him.

He drew close to the gangway, and, as Madame Seraskier placed her hand upon the rail, he advanced, raised his kepi, and said:

"I see, madame, that you have changed your maid."

The stout Frenchman who had taken his place on the boat deck of the *General Chanzy,* and who was in the act of lighting a cigar, was treated to a spectacle. He saw the Légionnaire corporal raise his hat to an old lady, the old lady fall in a faint, and the old lady's maid drop the dressing bag she was carrying, pick up her skirts, and run, pursued by the Légionnaire. He saw her captured and handcuffed, and then he saw the old lady and her daughter led off by the police.

Then the boat started, carrying him off to wonder forever what could have been the meaning of it all and how it all ended.

It ended in a court-martial at Oran, where Schneider was condemned to a year of the penal battalion, not for having run away, but for having lost his uniform; and Radoub, who knew where that uniform was, said nothing.

As for the character of Schneider, the regimental surgeon, a hard-bitten French colonial officer with a terrible eye for the truth of things, summed it up for me:

"Schneider joined the Legion, as we discovered at the court-martial, for no reason. He was suffering from the European disease that afflicts mostly well-to-do men and which is confined almost entirely to the continent of Europe—the disease that makes a man go off and commit suicide or join the Legion for no reason. He is tired of life. These men are nearly always of high intelligence, but they have no belief in a God, and, as in the case of Schneider, they often keep no faith with a friend. They are very crafty. We have had several of them in the service, and I speak from knowledge.

"When Schneider, after a couple of months of Algeria, began to dislike the business, he determined to make an end of it; but, knowing that it was next to impossible to escape by ordinary ways, he enlisted his old mother and his sister in his service. No heart, you see.

"I believe what is wrong with men like him is a brain that tires of ordinary stimuli and seeks for new sensations. Well, he is receiving plenty of them in the criminal battalion, building roads down there in the south. It is a remedy that will cure him; if it does not kill him."

The fourth story in this series is entitled "The Little Prince," and will appear in the June 7th POPULAR.

Getting His Goat

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "Homeward Bound," "Doubloons," Etc.

How it happened that fifty or sixty Yale men became pig tenders in obedience to the master mind of a certain freshman who boiled over with initiative

PERLEY HOTCHKISS was a Yale freshman who had no intention of loafing through college. He boiled over with initiative, and the one thing that made him sad was the lack of more than twenty-four hours in a day. His mind was so active that it outran his powers of speech, and he was apt to stutter when excited because he could not spill the words fast enough. He was thin, of course, for no youth could go his gait and lay on flesh, and the sallow complexion was probably due to loss of sleep and hasty meals. At one and the same time he was competing for the Yale *News* board, the freshman glee club, and the debating team, drumming up trade for a clothes-pressing concern, and managing an eating club. When not otherwise engaged, he dashed at his textbooks or concocted new schemes to fill any stray crevices in his schedule.

The freshman eleven was barred to Perley Hotchkiss, who had tons of spirit, but too few pounds of weight. He tried his best, however, and was banished from the squad on the second day. His interest was undimmed, and he considered it a duty to sprint out to the field, utter a few hearty cheers for his struggling comrades, and leg it back to the campus to keep the next engagement. This was in harmony with his doctrine that a fellow must never lose sight of the fact that he was a Yale man in honor bound to work like the dickens for the college.

Now, this happened to be a freshman football team which could get on very well without the artificial stimulus of cheers. It was composed of youngsters swift and brawny who had come down from the preparatory schools famed for athletic prowess, and most of them were expected to be varsity material in another year. It was an unusual combination of talent, an eleven which would have made trouble for many college teams. They played with terrific ardor and with a self-confidence that was half the battle.

The captain was a broad-chested, bow-legged, pugnacious tackle named Fairchild who had worn Exeter colors for three seasons. Some sort of a feud had existed between him and his successor as captain of the school team, and it was to be inferred that they hated each other with sincere enthusiasm. Fairchild's personality dominated the other freshmen, who began to think as he did, that their most important task was beating Exeter. In other seasons this match had been merely one of the preliminary schedule whose climax was the contest with the Harvard freshmen, but the implacable Fairchild decreed otherwise. They were eternally disgraced unless they fairly wiped Phillips Exeter Academy from the football map.

The Exeter lads got wind of this hostile attitude, but were undismayed. They fanned the flame in letters to friends at New Haven, poking fun at Fairchild as a sulky brute who was

making a spectacle of himself. What he needed was a good licking, and the Exeter team was ready to hand it to him. Gradually several hundred freshmen, who had no idea what it was all about, became possessed of the notion that the prestige of their glorious class was staked on this football issue with the ancient preparatory school in New England. They were an impulsive herd, easily swayed by prejudice, and the embittered Fairchild was naturally regarded as a leader.

Perley Hotchkiss had never even beheld the town of Exeter, and his diploma had been granted by a public high school, but he displayed an intense interest in this quarrel. He began a canvass of the class to ascertain how many men would pledge themselves to accompany the team to Exeter and show their loyalty. It was their duty to go, he asserted, whether they could afford it or not. The team must have their support. Alas, the response was disheartening. No more than a handful of freshmen signed the paper which Perley Hotchkiss circulated with so much conscientious zeal. The trouble with the others was mostly financial. Guileless and ignorant, they had been already separated from their allowances for the autumn term.

"It's no cheap little trip to New Hampshire and back," argued one of them. "There is the railroad fare and either a hotel bill or two nights in a sleeping car and incidentals to beat the band. The jaunt will make twenty-five dollars' worth of money look all shot."

"Q-quite right," stammered Perley, who was agitated, "b-but we owe it to the finest freshman team that ever s-stepped on a field."

"I wish somebody owed it to me," sighed the other. "Then you could watch me step out and try to collect. I admire your pep, but you can't round up a crowd."

"I have another week to get busy in!" cried Perley, whose elocution was back on the rails and running smoothly. "I am pretty good at organizing things." He flung out an arm in a nervous gesture, his eager features wore a startled expression, and he blurted, again tripping over his consonants:

"I just t-thought of something. They hit me s-suddenly, right out of a clear sky. I went West last summer and spent t-two weeks on a ranch. See you later."

What had occurred to Perley Hotchkiss in this inspirational manner was the proposition of transporting a crowd of freshmen to Exeter in a freight car. The expense per head would be trifling. Billed as live stock, their car would be sent through promptly, and they ought not to have to spend more than one night on the road. With plenty of hay to sleep on and some stuff to eat, they could be comfortable and happy. Procrastination was no thief of Perley's time, and he hurried downtown at once to the offices of the railroad.

He was passed along from one clerk to another until a traffic official listened courteously to his statement and proceeded to explain that his singular demand was out of the question. Perley Hotchkiss fidgeted for an opening, scowled most earnestly, and delivered himself of this breathless argument:

"I think you miss my p-point. If we can't be shipped as live stock, my s-scheme is that we go as attendants, just as the cowboys ride to Omaha or Denver in the c-cattle trains. I have figured it out, and I can't see how you can t-turn us down."

The railroad official, viewing this persistent freshman as an entertaining novelty, kept a serious face and gravely inquired: "Do you mind explaining how you boys expect to be passed as attendants in a live-stock car which contains no genuine live stock?"

"Easy enough," replied Perley. "I will put a p-pig in a crate, and a p-pig

certainly classes as live stock. And we fellows will go along to take care of him."

Fifty or sixty of you?" was the comment. "That pig would be mighty well taken care of en route. You are such an ingenious young man that I am truly sorry to discourage you. But it can't be done. The regulations stand in the way. The number of men allowed to ride with live stock must be limited. If I let you escort a pig to Exeter, the precedent would be bad for the company. Every stranded theatrical troupe could get back to Broadway cheap by purchasing one small pig."

"Anyhow, it's a corker of a scheme," faltered Perley Hotchkiss, his elation so subdued that he no longer stuttered. "Maybe I can think of something else in the next few days. I have set my heart on getting a mob of heelers for that Exeter game."

"By all means come and talk it over with me," was the cordial injunction. "You make me forget my troubles."

The traffic official passed it along as an excellent joke at lunch, and the story made its way through the office building until it reached the second vice president. He laughed and thought no more about it until he went home to dinner that night. There he found a guest, a languid and leisurely Yale senior whose name was Jeremiah Altemus, junior. The father of Jerry was a railroad magnate of the Middle West who had been an intimate friend of the vice president for many years. The latter had therefore welcomed the son to the hospitality of his home in New Haven. It was an agreeable refuge, and Jerry had formed the habit of sauntering in quite informally.

It was with gusto that the host related the episode of Perley Hotchkiss and the live-stock car, and Jerry listened across the table with a faint, sardonic smile. He had encountered Perley, who dunned him for subscriptions and patronage of various kinds. It was praiseworthy of a freshman to display such infernal zeal, but he was a pest, in Jerry's estimation, and deserved to be toned down. He was too glaring a feature of the campus landscape. Jerry had prepared at Exeter, and he was fond of the school. The bad feeling which had been stirred up by the bellicose Fairchild was most deplorable. It would be all wrong to send a crowd of freshmen to the game. In their silly mood, they might start a rough-house and impair the relations between Yale and Exeter. It was a bumptious freshman class, objectionably so now that its football team seemed to be invincible.

These righteous thoughts Jerry kept to himself, but there was mischief in his eye as he loafed in the library with the vice president after dinner and talked shrewdly of current affairs, for he was wise for his years and accustomed to the society of older men. At the opportune moment he suggested, in silken accents:

"This Perley Hotchkiss really deserves to win, don't you think, sir? Now if there was any way to stretch the rules a bit and let him have a live-stock car—that dodge of his about the pig is so deucedly neat—and it could be kept out of the newspapers so as not to establish an awkward precedent for you."

"There is the interstate commerce commission, for one thing," amiably replied the other, "and a lot of rules about freight and passenger traffic."

"But on some of your little, back-country branch lines you still run mixed trains," argued Jerry; "one battered old coach sandwiched between freight cars. This live wire of a Perley Hotchkiss has sprung something new on you. If you could see any way to cut the red tape and haul these burbling freshmen to the end of your road and turn them

over to the Boston & Maine as fast freight, green and perishable——"

The vice president was a stout and kindly man with a sense of humor, and he had once been a Yale undergraduate himself. Besides, he was fond of Jerry Altemus because he was the son of his father.

"If you are personally interested in this absurd pilgrimage," said he, "possibly I might be wheedled into letting it go through. However, I should insist on the pig in a crate. Freshmen are not live stock, and you can't find them mentioned in any of our classifications. Therefore they will have to travel as pig tenders."

"Really, I should consider it a personal favor!" gratefully exclaimed Jerry, pressing his advantage. "These kids show the proper spirit. And I am sure my father will enjoy it when I write him. A railroad corporation never loses anything by behaving as if it had a human soul."

"Now, see here, Jerry, my boy," suddenly spoke the vice president, mindful of the dignity of his position, "my name is not to appear in this, do you understand? It wouldn't do at all. I'm not sure whether you are letting me in for a felony or a misdemeanor. A railroad official never knows, these days. You might catch this Perley Hotchkiss on the campus and discuss things in a casual manner. Mention the Exeter game and ask him how many freshmen expect to go with the team. Then you can artfully suggest that he tackle the railroad again, never say die, and all that."

"Egg him on? He doesn't need it, sir. One hint and he won't wait to listen. With an air of authority, as the son of a railroad man, I will merely slip him a word of advice."

The dawdling Jerry could be energetic when the occasion demanded. He waylaid Perley Hotchkiss after chapel next morning and flattered that ingenuous youth by displaying a paternal interest in his affairs. Young Mr. Altemus was one of the exclusive coterie of seniors who dwelt on Olympian heights, and it was a condescension for him to notice a freshman. Perley blushed and thanked him, waited a moment for courtesy's sake, and was off like a bullet. The unscrupulous Jerry, who dearly loved a conspiracy, smiled a meaning smile and sauntered in search of a partner. Bob Sedgwick and Fred Varney were tied hard and fast to the varsity eleven. Several other men had good reasons for keeping clear of "fool stunts," and Jerry finally enlisted that massive person, Llewellyn Chalmers Jordan, who was better known as "Sleepy Mike."

Perley Hotchkiss was tremendously pleased to find that the railroad was willing to reconsider his unusual request. Speedily he recruited as many loyal freshmen as could possibly be crowded into a live-stock car. The janitor of a dormitory agreed to buy a pig and stow it in his back yard until needed. The enterprise was to be kept secret. Perley feared the sophomores, who would like nothing better than a chance to raid this excursion. The freshmen were their natural and lawful prey.

There were no portents of trouble, however, and late in the afternoon of Friday the members of the party stole from the campus and gathered at the rendezvous in the freight yard. They carried suit cases and bundles wrapped in newspapers which looked as if they might be blankets. A shifting engine was noisily sorting out cars and making up the express freight. The conductor informed Perley that he had been told to insist on a quick transfer for live-stock car No. 32456, and that orders had been sent ahead to that effect. With good luck, it ought to be out of the terminal junction bright and early in

the morning and dropped on the siding at Exeter by noon of Saturday.

It was, in fact, the jolliest kind of a lark, far more fun than riding in a Pullman. They nestled in the hay and cheered every few minutes as the train rattled past farm and village in the cold, clear night. By the light of a brakeman's lantern swinging from the roof, they played cards, and a volunteer glee club sang itself hoarse. The pig in the crate received their thoughtful attention. Never was a pig so personally conducted. A ribbon of Yale blue was knotted about his crinkly tail, and he wore a blanket on which were emblazoned the class numerals. He was fed at frequent intervals on pie, sandwiches, doughnuts, peanuts, and ginger ale. It was Perley's intention to lead him upon the Exeter field as the mascot of the freshman invasion.

There was no opportunity to tumble out and scout for coffee and a civilized breakfast until the car had been switched to another train and was rumbling through the northern part of Massachusetts. Then came a delay and a halt to let a passenger local pass. The siding was in a small town, and across the street from the station the hungry freshmen descried the sign of a restaurant. They charged in a body with whoops of joy, nor lingered to brush the hay from their garments. The early morning had been frosty, and they were chilled and stiff and weary.

It was a little restaurant, unprepared for this onslaught, and they fell upon it like a swarm of locusts. The vanguard filled it to the doors, and the overflow clamored on the sidewalk. During this confusion there approached the siding, from the opposite track, two young men who moved rapidly, but without excitement, as though they knew precisely what they were doing. One was dark and slender, and his manner was sophisticated, while the other towered hugely, his features placid and innocent. They very much resembled Jeremiah Altemus, junior, and Llewellyn Chalmers Jordan. The freight train screened them from discovery by the freshmen who were engaged in storming the restaurant. Warily they beckoned the conductor and a brakeman and held a low-voiced conference. There must have been some prearrangement, for the conductor glanced at a memorandum which had been given him at the terminal junction. Presently he also held in his hand something which looked like paper currency. This he divided with the brakeman. They were honest men, but they had large families, and they needed the money.

One of them acted as a sentry while the pig in its crate was shoved out of a side door of the live-stock car. Surfeited by a rich and varied diet, the pig emitted not one solitary warning squeal as it was carried across the tracks and hoisted into a waiting wagon. The driver whipped his horse, and the purloined pig vanished around the nearest corner. A moment later, Messrs. Altemus and Jordan hurdled into an automobile and even more swiftly absented themselves. Their flight was in the direction of Exeter. Jerry, who was at the steering wheel, ejaculated, as they gained the open country:

"My, but I did want to stick around and see the sport! Unsafe, though! Those freshmen would be apt to start something if they could lay hands on us."

"You surely did engineer a complicated jest," drawled Jordan, "but it seems to be coming through according to schedule. How did you dope it out that the bunch would fall off the train for breakfast at this particular hamlet?"

"Railroad talent shines in the Altemus family. I inherit my share of it," was the modest answer. "You observed that I used the telephone freely this morning."

"And greased the skids with lavish

coin; no doubt," said the large one. "You seem to be able to corrupt transportation systems just as if you were a State legislature, or vice versa."

"Not guilty," laughed Jerry. "I am strong for the uplift. This performance is warranted absolutely harmless. It gives Perley Hotchkiss a bully chance to show how he can organize himself in an emergency."

Meanwhile the carload of freshmen had swept the restaurant bare of everything but the crockery, and they began to straggle back to the train. It was the nimble Perley who was first to climb into the live-stock car, and he promptly uttered a loud cry of dismay. There was no pig in a crate, as he assured himself after blinking rapidly at the place where the pig had been. His comrades demanded an explanation, but he had none to offer. He rushed toward the caboose to find the conductor, who stood outside chatting with a brakeman.

"Shy a pig, are you?" replied the conductor, who was quite calm and collected. "Some of you lads ought to have stayed to watch it."

"You are resp-p-ponsible," spluttered Perley, who was greatly perturbed. "Why didn't you keep an eye on our p-pig?"

"With fifty or sixty of you pig tenders in charge? You're joking. If you have a case against the railroad for loss of property in transit, shoot it to the claim agent's office in writing."

"Oh, forget it, Perley!" broke in another freshman. "His piglets is a nuisance. I'm glad we are rid of him."

The conductor looked at his watch, and his expression became severe as he exclaimed:

"I pull out in just ten minutes more. Sorry, but I'll have to leave you all here. You can catch a passenger train for Exeter, or if you haven't got the price the walking is said to be good."

This was a bombshell. Twenty freshmen were indignantly shouting at him at once, and the brakeman looked out for a handy coupling pin in case of need. There were symptoms of a riot. Perley Hotchkiss waved his arms and yelled for silence. He was the rightful leader and spokesman.

"This car is b-billed through to Exeter, New Hampshire, as express freight!" he cried. "What's more, it's p-paid for, and I have the company's receipt in my contract. I'll sue for damages and c-collect thousands of dollars. What's the matter with you, anyhow? Have you gone c-crazy?"

The conductor stolidly stood his ground. If he winked at the brakeman, it was done with a finesse that defied detection.

"Your bill of lading calls for live stock," was the firm response. "There is no more live stock in the car. I have no authority to carry you as passengers. You are traveling in charge of live stock, and where is it?"

"You can search us!" sighed Perley, whose active wits were stalled on a dead center. "On the level, you don't really mean to throw us off? How the d-dickens can we get back to New Haven? We didn't bring much money with us."

"Produce the pig and you are entitled to occupy the car," was the cruel mandate. "All I have to go by is the rules of the company."

The gloom was heavy as a wet blanket. The freshmen gazed wanly at each other, and then turned to Perley Hotchkiss, as by a common instinct. He perceived that they expected him to extricate them, and he aroused himself. If the expedition should come to grief in this lamentable manner, the scoffing campus would never let go of it. His career was at stake. He threw back his head, squared his shoulders, and his eyes sparkled, as he declaimed to the conductor:

"Live stock, eh? Here, fellows, chase

yourselves and p-pick up anything you can find, a dog, a cat, a chicken. Borrow, buy, or steal it. And beat it back to the train. It doesn't have to be a p-pig. You've got five minutes more."

"There's a live rattlesnake in a glass case over yonder, in the window of a saloon, Perley," piped up one freshman. "After you, Alphonse."

"There goes a horse I'll bet we can buy for ten dollars!" yelled another. "But he will fall down if you take him out of the shafts."

"He won't do!" shouted Perley. "No time to load him on the car."

At this critical moment there came trotting into view a fractious goat attached to a two-wheeled cart, a small boy whacking him with a stick. He was a patriarchal goat whose whiskers were gray, and his temper had grown no better with advancing years. The freshmen roared with delight and scared the small boy by dashing at him from all sides. He managed to comprehend that they wanted to buy the goat and named seven dollars as the price. The parting seemed to cause him no sorrow. He informed Perley that the derned old goat had butted him pretty near into the middle of next week.

The prize was snatched out of his harness and picked up bodily by a dozen pairs of arms. As they ran for the train, the conductor gave the signal to go ahead.

The cars were slowly moving as they hurled themselves aboard, clutching the goat. The last freshmen were drawn in by the neck, and the party, all present and accounted for, was again rattling along on the road to Exeter. They cheered for Yale, for their class, for Perley Hotchkiss, and loudest of all for the goat, who was dubbed Mortimer Spence because of a fancied resemblance to an estimable member of the Yale faculty.

The conductor sat in the caboose listening to the jubilant racket, and he appeared annoyed. After making a nefarious bargain with Jerry Altemus, he had failed to deliver the goods. To the pensive brakeman he grumbled:

"These freshmen are the guys that put the *live* in live stock. Get me? They outguessed us. If we could have beat 'em to the goat, but they saw it first."

"I'm not so awful sorry," was the reply. "I never was any too strong for these practical jokes. Young Altemus and that seven-foot side-kicker of his seemed to think it was a scream. Say, we don't have to refund, do we?"

"Not on your life, George! We stand pat. There's no danger of a comeback."

The freshmen had forgotten their grudge against the railroad. The goat was more fun than a circus. It was necessary to hold him in leash with a couple of leather belts, for he rammed his way from one end of the car to the other. With room for a fair start, he moved as if shot from a howitzer. At the first attempt he smote Perley Hotchkiss in the pit of the stomach. The dauntless leader doubled up like a hinge and uttered a sighing moan. It was several minutes before he recovered his wind sufficiently to call Mortimer Spence harsh names. After a spirited tussle, two tiny blue flags were attached to the sweeping horns. It was eminently fitting that Perley should lead the procession to the Exeter field and escort the goat, but he firmly declined. Whenever the goat waggled its head at him and blatted defiance, Perley clapped his hands to his stomach. Once was enough.

At the railroad station in Exeter, Jerry Altemus awaited the arrival of an express from Boston, hoping to meet some of his old school friends who might be coming back for the game. He was in the best of spirits. There would be no crowd of noisy, hostile

freshmen to make asses of themselves, and they had been taught a necessary lesson. To be ditched in a strange town ought to do them a whole lot of good. That bright boy, Perley Hotchkiss, would be less conspicuous on the campus after this. Jerry was airing these sentiments when a freight train pulled in, backed, and went ahead again, and dropped what was unmistakably a live-stock car.

It was empty, of course, concluded Jerry, and he grinned in a heartless manner. A moment later, there came rocketing from the car a long, concerted cheer with three "Yales" tacked on the end of it. Jerry's happy smile faded, and he cast a sad, perplexed glance at Sleepy Jordan. It was not an exit, but an eruption, from the car as the freshmen hastily formed a line behind Perley Hotchkiss and a braver youngster who led a gray-whiskered, rampant goat.

"Now where did they get it?" said Jerry, with a sigh.

"Perhaps the conductor double-crossed you," suggested Jordan. "He may have turned around and sold them the goat. Either that, or you failed to size up the acute intellect that sizzles beneath the hat of Perley Hotchkiss."

"I lose," was the reply. "Listen to the idiots. They are cheering Mortimer Spence. Where does the professor of constitutional English history break into the plot?"

"Maybe they hid him in the car to use as live stock in case somebody steals the goat."

Jerry turned away and refused to look at the freshman parade which was romping in the direction of the nearest street. Their line of march led past the lawns and buildings of the school, and the news spread swiftly. This spectacular invasion was accepted as a challenge, and the Exeter lads decided to muster for a procession to the field. It was inferred that these freshmen were friends and followers of their own football captain, Fairchild, and partisans of his personal grudge against the Exeter captain. For this reason the welcome was not cordial.

When the rival elevens confronted each other it was seen that the Exeter captain, who was tall, freckled, and red-headed, had shifted his own playing position from guard to tackle, which brought him opposite Fairchild in the rush line. They glowered at each other in a ferocious manner, as if determined to make it a combat instead of a game.

Jerry Altemus surveyed them with marked disapproval and asked one of the schoolboys:

"What ails those two man-eaters? How did it start? They certainly do not love each other."

"It was a girl," solemnly answered the informant, who must have been all of seventeen and spoke as a man of the world. "'Bull' Fairchild and 'Slugger' Hammill, our captain, were desperately in love with her last year, when they were both at Exeter. She promised to go to the school dance with one of them, I forget which, and then chucked him up for the other. That sort of thing won't do. Girls don't seem to realize the seriousness of it. A fellow's whole life may be blighted."

"And is the fickle fairy here to-day, may I inquire?"

"Yes. I like her nerve, don't you? We have an idea that she has promised to favor whichever captain wins the game, just to sick 'em on. Some women are heartless."

"It was ever thus, my son," murmured Jerry. "They like to sit in the arena and waggle thumbs down."

The first ten minutes of the game showed that the captains twain were aptly nicknamed. They were earnest players, but they appeared to forget that the gentle pastime of football was presumed to enlist the services of eleven men on a side. They were contented

to fight it out between themselves. The logical result was that one lost his temper and the other mislaid his about two seconds later. A signal, a scrimmage, a run down the field, and twenty youngsters were intent on the ball, while Bull Fairchild and Slugger Hammill remained behind, absorbed in pounding each other.

It was an absurd sight, this pair of tackles isolated, taking no part in the play, fists flying, until an official rushed up to separate them. He promptly ruled them both off the field, snatched them out of the game, and scolded like a stern parent. Sheepish was the aspect of the two captains as they retreated to the side lines, heartily ashamed of themselves. Their behavior had been that of undisciplined children, and they had failed in their duty to their respective teams. Sobered and repentant were Bull Fairchild and Slugger Hammill, fallen champions, but the effect on their followers was quite the contrary.

The Yale freshmen were convinced that the Exeter man was guilty of starting the ruction. The schoolboys were no less certain that Fairchild had struck the first blow.

"Mucker ball!" yelled an Exeter cheer leader, wildly brandishing his megaphone. "Chase 'em off the field. They think they can play mucker ball and get away with it."

The freshman party was vastly outnumbered, but Perley Hotchkiss cared not for the odds. Unterrified was his mien as he shouted: "Chase n-nothing! This S-Slugger Hammill was looking for t-trouble, and he g-got it. Serve him right if F-Fairchild knocked his b-block off."

The officials and members of the Exeter faculty quieted the disturbance and threatened to end the game if the crowd could not behave like young gentlemen. Play was resumed, the tactics of both teams shaky and uncertain without leadership. Yale managed to score a touchdown on a ragged series of rushes, and Exeter elected to depend upon the toe of its full back, who was a proficient drop-kicker. His first attempt was easily successful, and the school felt confident that he could repeat the trick, because the freshmen were unable to force the playing away from dangerous territory.

Among the spectators were several hundred townspeople, and they were loudest in applause of the agile drop kicker. He belonged to them, it seemed, as the son of an old Exeter family, and had grown up in the town. If his father was present it must have been difficult for him to recognize his offspring in this lanky, mud-besmeared figure armored in leather cap and nose guard, his red jersey torn half off his back and flapping in tatters.

Mortimer Spence, the venerable goat, had been vexed by the noise and commotion around him. The experience rasped his nerves, and kind words failed to soothe him. His guardians tried to lead him up and down the side line as a harbinger of victory, but he either balked or knocked the pins from under innocent bystanders. The football players seemed to provoke his ire more than anything else. He was anxious to take part in a scrimmage.

The Exeter full back stood thirty yards from the Yale goal posts. He was tensely poised to receive the ball and lift it for another drop kick that should clinch a victory for his school. The disorganized freshmen were at his mercy. The crowd was silent and breathless. It was the crucial instant of the game. The hush was broken by a long and angry blat from Mortimer Spence. He reared, plunged forward, and gained his liberty.

Perhaps it was the flapping red jersey of the Exeter full back that caught his sinister eye. At any rate, he picked his target without hesitation or wavering. Head down and tail up, he flew

like an arrow, a battering-ram propelled with amazing energy. Nobody shouted a warning. With one accord, the spectators held their breath. They simply had to see the finish. Curiosity overpowered them. The full back was too intent on his task to note the quick thud of flying feet behind him.

Just as the ball was passed to him, Mortimer Spence arrived. In his long and wicked life he had never achieved a collision so brilliant as this. The thump was heard across the field. The hapless full back shot ahead, landed on hands and knees, and furrowed the turf with his nose. He had never before gained five yards as suddenly as this. The ball went spinning off to one side, and was pounced upon by an alert freshman who sprinted for the Exeter goal, but the referee stopped laughing long enough to call him back on the ground of interference.

Ordering Mortimer off the field was easier said than done. He was eager to add another red jersey to his score.

During this lively interlude, the Exeter stripling who sat next to Jerry Altemus seemed to be in the throes of conflicting emotions. He denounced the Yale freshmen as a bunch of cheap sports who had purposely turned loose the goat in order to spoil a drop kick, while in the next breath he declared that it served the smitten full back right. This paradox interested Jerry, who turned to inquire in bland accents:

"Would you mind elucidating yourself just a few? What about your unfortunate schoolmate who was knocked heels over head?"

"Why, he used to own that goat," answered the lad. "We lived in the same street when we were kids, right here in Exeter. I recognized the goat the minute I laid eyes on him. Jim Stone—that's our full back—sold the goat to a boy that moved to Haverhill, or somewhere near there. Jim was mighty unkind to that goat. He used to wallop the tar out of it, and I guess he put a crimp in its disposition. That's why I couldn't help saying it served him right."

"Ha, ha, the long arm of coincidence, likewise a package of poetic justice!" chuckled Jerry.

"Something like that," agreed the Exeter student, "but it's a rotten trick to break up a football game with a hellion of an old billy goat."

Jerry's attention was drawn to the field. The officials had ordered the teams to resume the game. There was much angry argument, but the Exeter players sulkily obeyed. They pounded away at the freshman line and gave the full back another opportunity for a drop kick. He was nervous, however, and frequently glanced over his shoulder. Perley Hotchkiss and his comrades were chanting: "We've got his goat! Oh, *have* we got his goat? Whose goat did we get? Jim Stone's goat!"

This was no idle figure of speech. The full back was not the same man. Mortimer Spence had been securely fastened with a rope, but his victim was obviously afraid the rope might break. The shock to his nerves had been severe, and he knew that goat of old. Twice he essayed a goal from the field and failed miserably. The first attempt booted the ball into the rush line, and the second drove it into a grand stand. The freshmen ba-a-a-ed derisively. Their eleven pulled itself together and tore through for long gains. It looked as if they had Exeter on the run.

Then it was that Bull Fairchild, the ejected captain, showed himself to be a sound sportsman at heart. He consulted with Jerry Altemus, who was a Yale senior and a prominent alumnus of Exeter, and asked his advice.

"It's not fair for us to play eleven men and a goat on our team," said Fairchild, who was very unhappy. "Exeter had us licked when the goat

butted into the game. That full back has gone all to pieces."

"I was hoping you would feel this way," replied Jerry, with a friendly smile. "It has been a poor performance for Yale men all the way through."

"My fault, most of it, Mr. Altemus," doggedly affirmed the captain. "I stirred up a lot of nasty feeling, and I'm awfully sore on myself."

"What do you suggest, Fairchild?"

"That we stop the game and call it off. The freshmen can score another touchdown or two—it's a cinch with the Exeter full back up in the air, but I don't want to win a game that way."

"Bully for you!" cried Jerry. "Shall I propose it, or will you speak to the Exeter captain?"

"I guess I had better have it out with Slugger Hammill," muttered the fighting freshman.

Presently the curious crowd beheld the two captains meet and earnestly converse. Instead of squaring off at each other, they exchanged stumbling apologies and shook hands. Then each called his team from the field and explained the reason. At this display of chivalrous spirit, the personally conducted excursion of Perley Hotchkiss regretted its behavior and cheered for both captains and their elevens, with no mention of the goat. Perley did not lead the chorus, however, for a friend had presented him to an uncommonly pretty slip of a girl who wore Exeter colors. It was all over with Perley, and she did not dislike him, for they strolled in the direction of the gate and left the game to its fate. The lad who sat beside Jerry Altemus stared with open mouth and confided:

"Say, could you beat it? There goes the girl that Bull Fairchild and Slugger Hammill scrapped over. She walks off with a new one."

"Accept it as a warning," Jerry told him.

The atmosphere had been cleared of its unseemly bickering and quarrelsome spirit. It occurred to the older Exeter lads to give a supper for the two elevens and the visiting freshmen and alumni. They hired a hall and a caterer in a great hurry. It was a sort of impromptu demonstration whose purpose was to bury the hatchet with due form and ceremony. Jerry Altemus may have had something to do with instigating the love feast, and it is fair to surmise that he helped foot the bills. All these fine lads were in a mood of repentance. It was as though they had awakened from an unhappy dream. There was no longer a break in the cordial relations that had always existed between the ancient school and the older college.

There were speeches by the two captains, who appeared rather awkward and chagrined. They sat side by side and discovered that life held many things more important than girls. Mr. Jerry Altemus made a graceful toastmaster, and, in conclusion, he had this to say:

"In my opinion, both teams won today's game. It was a much more satisfactory finish than if the score had decided it. In that event you would have continued to dislike and misunderstand each other. Now we are all good sportsmen together, and we have found out that the code of honor and fair play is the biggest thing in athletics. I feel that we are under obligations to the goat."

There was a scuffle in the hall, and three freshmen hauled in the object of this eulogy. His horns were now wreathed with the colors of Exeter and Yale intertwined. He was persuaded to make the circuit of the room, and was then presented to his former owner, Jim Stone, the full back, who seemed ungrateful. Perley Hotchkiss was flushed and tremulous with excitement when called upon for a few remarks, but he managed to stammer:

"Our c-crowd has an apology to

offer. It was s-shabby of us to rattle the full back with that cheer we invented, about g-getting his g-goat. Of course, it did strike us as awfully f-funny. We started from New Haven with a p-pig in a crate, and we arrived with a g-goat, and I guess it was a fortunate swap. Now, f-freshmen, a long cheer for Exeter, and then we'll sing, 'For they are jolly, good f-fellows.'"

When the pleasant evening ended, Perley was about to lead his companions to the live-stock car, but Jerry Altemus intervened. He was not ready to confess, but he could try to square his conscience. Leading Perley aside, he informed him:

"It will be no fun to go back to New Haven in a freight train. The novelty has worn off. You fellows have behaved well, and you are a credit to Yale. Spend the night here, some of you at the hotel, and the rest in the school dormitories. The boys will be glad to take care of you. I talked to them. To-morrow morning you can go through to New Haven in parlor cars. The tickets will be at the station. Oh, bother your thanks! The expense will be met by anonymous friends."

"We're g-game to go home by freight, Mr. Altemus," protested Perley. "I never heard of such g-generosity."

"Well, it's not exactly that," said Jerry, with a shrug. "By the way, have you any theory to account for the disappearance of the pig in the crate?"

"Not the slightest idea, Mr. Altemus. What do you t-think about it?"

"It gets my goat, Perley," was the earnest verdict of Jeremiah Altemus, junior.

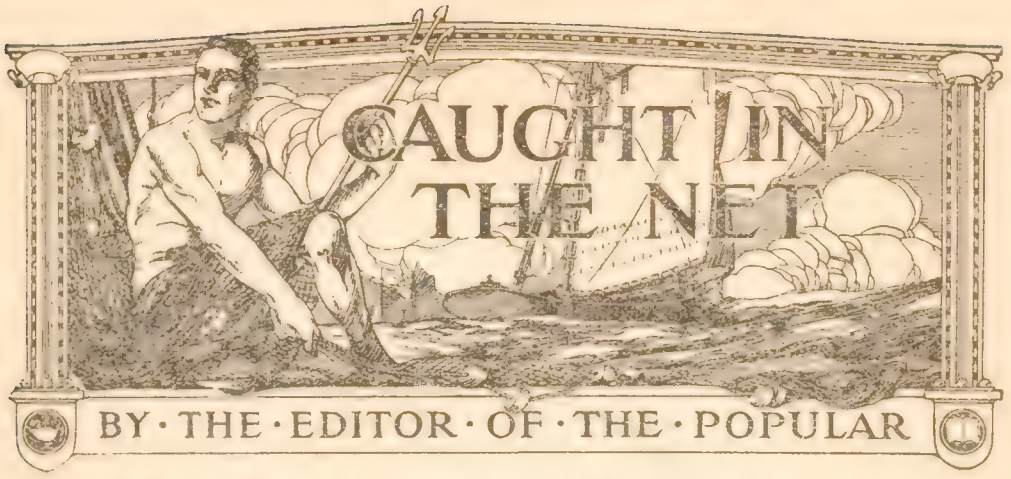
THE TRADE WINDS' CALL

THE breeze comes up from the south to me
And whispers of waves on a sun-baked strand.
The rolling swell of the tropic sea
Then lures like a lulling memory
Of the joys I knew and of joys to be
Where the coral islands stand.

The palm trees wave like slim nautch girls
With beckoning arms o'er the jealous miles
Where the still lagoon like a serpent curls
To the jungle line, and the soft wave swirls
As the ocean sighs while the surf unfurls
Its lace to the sun's warm smiles.

The sea birds call as they wheel away
In the wake of the ships that ride
With trailing foam adown the bay
To fade on the misty ocean way,
And I feel I must float as free as they
To the south on the ebbing tide.

THOMAS GRANT SPRINGER.



CONGRESS AND THE PURSE STRINGS OF THE NATION

ASTONISHING revelations have come to us in the wake of this mighty war, and none more so than the reaction upon ourselves politically and socially; and it is evident we are in only the first throes of an economic renaissance, which shall be as fruitful as it is far-reaching. Signs are not lacking for those who have more than surface penetration. The fabric of this government is undergoing a pitiless and searching analysis, and already we know ourselves to be in need of drastic reform and reorganization that shall meet and cope with the new conditions under which we live. For the past year or so Congress has been the focus of bitter criticism. Startling truths and instances of crass neglect and inefficiency have alarmed and, at the same time, illuminated our vision. Governmental machinery that we have hitherto regarded with tolerance, if not with indifference, must suffer check and change. It has become the fashion to arraign and berate Congress, especially the lower House, but while we may countenance and agree with many of the strictures, we firmly believe that the political system is at fault, rather than the men.

For one thing, the power of the purse possessed by Congress, which was originally devised by the Fathers as a safeguard against individual manipulation and corruption, must be abrogated in some measure, if we desire the highest justice and equity; for the very thing guarded against has come to pass through a multitude of unforeseen influences generated by unprecedented growth in population, vast accumulations of money under private control, and the development of enormous industries. When the Fathers of the Constitution drew up that document of political genius, they did not, nor could they, anticipate all that the future held in the way of a complex, commercial commonwealth.

For more than one hundred years Congress has steadily increased in numbers of senators and representatives, their wants and duties multiplied beyond ordinary comprehension, until they present a picture of legislative bodies swamped — buried — in bills of their own creation; the majority of the members clamoring for appropriations for local needs, while national necessities are either forgotten or deliberately ignored! In the House of Representatives, where appropriations must originate, the spectacle is a sad one for a citizen to contemplate. Not utterly hopeless is the scene, but the daily "logrolling," the secretive "cau-

cus," and the all-powerful and wire-pulling "committees," combined with the hundreds of members seeking their petty ends, give one a feeling that it is, as a whole, a sorry muddle. Whether the remedy lies in the annual budget system of Europe, or in the creation of an entirely new institution, we must decide, but, without cavil or doubt, fundamental changes are in order, and we are sure that the Fathers, if living to-day, would recognize the urgency of reformation of the power of the purse in the national government. The following quotation from one of Bryce's essays supports our claim:

> The republic has fared far otherwise than as Hamilton and his friends either hoped or feared. In this there is nothing to impeach their wisdom. They saw the dangers of their own time, and, like wise and patriotic men, provided the best remedies which existing conditions permitted. Some dangers they overcame so completely, particularly the financial misdoings of State legislatures, that these have now passed out of memory. They could not foresee what the power of money would become, because there was then little money in the country. They could not foresee the astonishing development of party machinery, because it is a perfectly new thing in the history of the world; and human imagination never does more, at any rate in the field of politics and sociology, than body forth things a little bigger than, or in some other wise a little varying from, what they have been before. It cannot create something out of nothing. Least of all could they divine what the results would be of the coexistence of the money power and the party machine. Nor did even Tocqueville, writing half a century later, when wealth had already appeared, and the party machine was in places beginning to work, perceive what both had in store.

REAL PLAY BOYS OF THE WEST

FARGO, North Dakota, boasts a citizen who has conceived the idea of cultivating the dramatic impulse among the farmers of his State, and in this way creating a social and artistic community of common interests. Alfred G. Arvold is the name of the expounder of the conception, and he is an instructor in the Dakota Agricultural College, being at the head of the department of public discussion and social service. Already thousands of people have evinced an interest in his project, which has come to be known as "The Little Country Theater Movement." His plans are of the simplest nature, and he lays special stress on his clients devoting themselves to themes closely allied with their own lives and environment, and he frowns upon any suggestion of "high-brow literature" or uplift work. What he desires and recommends, for the most part, are the idyllic and bucolic pieces that already exist or that may be written or devised by those interested in the movement.

To illustrate his theory of sticking close to the earth for his material, Mr. Arvold has planned a pageant of cabbages! Huge papier-mâché vegetables are to be constructed, in each of which a pretty girl may be concealed until a given moment, and then lo! she appears as the spirit of the plant. Homely symbolism, but why not? "People may laugh when I tell them about it," said Mr. Arvold, "but have you ever noticed the color of cabbages, green and blue, and a sort of dusty iridescent? Or have you ever thought that the color of onions is wonderful and that it might be used symbolically to express something?"

Something of the spirit of the earliest, pastoral Greeks animates this project of Mr. Arvold, for many of the myths and nature-worship ceremonials of ancient Hellas took their rise among the tillers of the soil and the shepherds. And this poet-agriculturist dreams of leading his people to discover the beauty and poetry that are all about them, and to endeavor to express their resulting emotions in word and action. Rich are his hopes, too, for he claims that his human material

is of the best—natives of the most romantic countries of Europe where folk stories and folk songs have sprung from time immemorial.

Mr. Arvold invites the coöperation of his State and pledges himself to advise and direct communities that wish to produce a simple play or devise a pageant. According to latest report, his hands are full, which promises well for "The Little Country Theater Movement."

SENSE OF HUMOR IN ANIMALS

THAT some animals have a sense of humor has come to be the belief of many well-informed people, who have what is known as a "sympathy with animals." There is a story of a colony of monkeys, a member of which was sick, and individuals in which indulged in the practice of slyly pulling the sick monkey's tail every now and then by way of a rough practical joke. Whether or not the story is true, there are well-authenticated instances of an apparent sense of humor on the part of individual animals, notably elephants and dogs. In one of the old-time traveling circuses, children were allowed to sit on the back of the chief performing elephant, whose name was Jim, after his regular performances were over. On one or two of these occasions this pachyderm gave his body an almost imperceptible shake, and the children came tumbling down, but were unhurt, as they fell on a layer of sawdust. "Jim must have his joke" was the remark of his trainer.

A party of friends were camping out last summer in the upper part of New York State. One day they sat on a grassy slope overlooking a pond, which was bounded by a narrow causeway. With them was a large dog of the retriever type, who lay, half asleep, on the grass. A peddler, with his pack strapped on his back, came along the causeway and stooped to look at something in the water. Suddenly the dog got up, and, rushing down to the causeway, put its front paws on the peddler's back, shoving him into the pond, which was only about three feet deep, and rushed back again. When the peddler scrambled to his feet, the dog was lying, blinking lazily, as if he had not moved, and the look of utter astonishment on the peddler's face was side-splitting. Cases are on record of dogs, who, when they gained possession of bones, played apparent jokes on other dogs. They would leave the bones in the way of the other dogs, and, when the latter were within reach of them, would seize the bones quickly and disappear.

These and many other instances which could be given would go to prove, apparently, that man has no monopoly of the sense of humor, and that there are animal as well as human jokers.

"THERE SHE BLOWS!"

AGAIN that cry may ring in our ears with new significance, for it is not at all impossible that the soaring price of petroleum and its products may bring about a revival of the whaling industry, and sturdy sons of the sea once more go forth to hunt the leviathan with all their old-time ardor and courage. There is a dearth of oil in the land, and for a half century or more the whale has been left practically free to breed, and it is only logical that man should turn to this sea source to supply his want.

It is a common and mistaken impression that whales are scarce and that the extinction of these mammals has been responsible for the decline of the whalers'

business. This is erroneous. Real reasons for the slump in the picturesque trade were the drop in the prices of whale oil and the rise in cost of outfitting and operating ships. It is estimated that the seas are more populated with whales to-day than ever before, though the creatures of a hundred feet in length may be scarce owing to the fact that it takes about a century for the whale to attain full size; but smaller ones of from forty to fifty feet in length are plentiful.

In 1850 there was in the United States a whaling fleet that numbered 736 vessels. New Bedford, the chief center of the industry, had, a half century ago, 314 vessels, on which were employed some 10,000 men. In one successful season they aggregated 10,636 barrels of sperm oil, 86,500 barrels of right whale oil, and over 600,000 pounds of whalebone! Last year the entire product of whale oil in New Bedford was approximately 10,000 barrels.

Whether the increasing scarcity of petroleum will direct the attention of men to whales as a source of oil remains to be seen, but if it should, we are quite sure that with their steam whalers and gun harpoons—which are fired from a cannon—there will be little of the old-time sport and uncertainty of the chase left.

NICKNAMES

THERE is something vital lacking in the man who never has had a fight or a nickname in his boyhood. Often as not, one hinges on the other. A fight helps to develop character, while a nickname sums it up in a word. But the nickname, with which we are at present concerned, indicates a certain degree of popularity that we would call attention to. Even when the appellation carries no flattery with it—indeed, it may smack of derision—there is bound to be some affection in its use. With things in general, it is the same as in the case of men—a nickname assumes a certain popularity or its close kin, notoriety. To make ourselves clear as possible on the point, let us cite three of our most familiar and popular interests: Money, love, and drink. You must admit, of course, that they are popular institutions? Now, consider for a silent moment their innumerable nicknames. Money, you will find, has a hundred symbols in polite and slang parlance. Love, we think, outdistances money in poetic phrase and feminine diction. Finally, drink has enough synonyms to make even sober Webster's Unabridged stagger, and every day, almost, a new one is added to the dizzy galaxy of the liquid way.

THE PINNACLE

RATHER be glad that you have not attained the heights, for neither health nor happiness, the two supreme blessings of mankind, necessarily dwell thereon. It is meet and praiseworthy that you should lift your eyes to the summits and turn your feet in their steep direction, but it is well to remember that they are never so wonderful as when seen from the level plain. All pinnacles are cold and isolated, and should you attain yours it is only the common experience that you look back with longing upon the peaceful valleys and pleasant bypaths that you have trod and left behind forever. High you may go, O Pilgrim; but, with the increased altitude, you will feel the sunshine growing colder, the air more difficult to breathe, and your only companions birds of prey. Therefore, if you have only reached a lowly nook where Nature smiles and blesses, rather be glad that you have not attained the heights!

The Familiar

By J. Kenilworth Egerton

Author of "The Emperor's Emerald," "The Perfume of Madness," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART

Again, a series of strange happenings, brought to the attention of Tommy Williams, breaks his resolve to meddle no more in tantalizing mysteries. This one concerns the precarious position of a young and beautiful newspaper woman, Ethel Carteret, who has mixed up in an intrigue involving the Emperor of Austria and his long-lost nephew, Johan Salvator, also known under the names of John Orth and Gneradi. One of the most powerful secret agents of Austria-Hungary, Major von Mulendorf, manages to kidnap Ethel Carteret—with her permission—and she sails for Europe on the trail of her "story" under the assumed name of Countess Czernac. Meanwhile, the real countess comes to Tommy in great distress, and tells him of the terrible dangers confronting the daring newspaper girl, for Mulendorf has unlimited power, and possesses the nature of an ape. To substantiate her revelations, it is learned that Mulendorf has left behind him evidences of attempted murder on two fellow-conspirators. Futhermore, Tommy is astonished to learn that Ethel Carteret is a niece of the multimillionaire, James B. Royan, for whom he had been planning mural decorations. The millionaire enjoins Tommy to pursue Maior von Mulendorf and his headstrong niece, and places at his disposal the private sea-going yacht, *Terpsichore*. Royan's son, Teddy, also urges Tommy. Scenting adventure, Tommy undertakes to bring back Ethel Carteret. Together with the Countess Czernac, Young Sullivan, an East Side pugilist, Teddy Royan, and the narrator of the story, Tommy sets sail. Reaching the shores of Italy, he discovers himself virtually thwarted, but in the nick of time the Archduchess Valerie, favorite niece of Emperor Francis Joseph, appears on the scene. She promises to aid Tommy in securing an audience with the ruler of Austria-Hungary.

(*In Two Parts—Part Two*)

CHAPTER IX.

TOMMY fully realized the risk of submitting Royan's cablegram to the archduchess, but he did not hesitate, and the effect fully confirmed the suspicions, which he had confided to me, that in planning the mad escapade of flight to America on the *Terpsichore*, she was actuated more by a yearning for excitement and adventure than by anxiety or affection for the colonel. From her earliest childhood she had been forced to live according to the strictly proscribed etiquette of the Hofburg court, and, while every luxury surrounded her and every ordinary wish was gratified, the restrictions had been rigid, and the constant attendance of the large retinue, which her rank made obligatory, had become so intolerably irksome that she longed for at least a temporary respite and freedom. And, although he played absolutely fair, Tommy was shrewd enough to submit an alternative which savored sufficiently of adventure and mystery to make it attractive.

It would be quite simple for her to return conventionally to Vienna accompanied by her entire retinue and to smuggle us in as well, for even the most audacious of the secret-service officers would have hesitated long before offending the emperor's favorite, but such a proposal would have been too commonplace to appeal to her and induce her to forsake the limited measure of freedom which she enjoyed in

Venice. On the other hand, a plan which implied eluding her chamberlain and the secretaries, ladies in waiting, maids of honor, and lackeys who comprised her cumbersome suite, and, practically eloping with us, promised a spice of excitement and a novelty in adventure. In addition Tommy carefully kept before her the fact that she owed the Familiar a grudge which coöperation with us would enable her to pay off with interest, and he managed so craftily that she entered enthusiastically into his plan and accepted his tacit leadership with a docility which caused the Countess Czernac's pretty eyebrows to arch in surprise.

The arrangements were perfectly simple; accompanied only by the countess and Mizzi, the archduchess left the palace ostensibly for a moonlight excursion to the Lagoons; but, once in the Grand Canal, a word to the gondoliers sufficed to turn the craft's prow toward the railway station where Tommy had ordered a private car attached to the night express for Vienna. To Sullivan and me he had delegated the task of watching Mizzi to prevent her from communicating with any one after she learned of the change of plans, and the young pugilist took the instructions so literally that I had difficulty in restraining his desire to punch the heads of the station officials who fairly overwhelmed us with their obsequious attentions when they recognized us as belonging to the party of the archduchess.

Mizzi was exceptionally pretty and attractive and bore a striking resemblance to her brother, a resemblance which was heightened when she smiled and spoke to me in surprisingly good English. She must have guessed the reason for bringing her along, but the Familiar included no novices in his retainers, and she calmly accepted the inevitable without protest, although her eyes searched the faces of the crowd in the waiting room through which we passed in the evident hope of recognizing a confrère in her peculiar profession who would send the warning which our close attention to her blocked. We were no more than safely secluded in our car when such suspicions as she may have had were turned to certainties, for without preamble Tommy informed her that her espionage had been no secret. She listened to his accusation in silence and made no denial, but she raised a protesting hand when he started to tell her of her brother's activities in New York.

"What Sulki may have done was in performance of the duties of his position," she interrupted. "I know America and its customs, and I know that his work may have brought him in conflict with your laws, but we draw a distinction between things done officially and——"

"We all do," said Tommy, his tone and manner softened by the recognition of her loyalty. "If your brother had been punished for dereliction in his official duties we should regard the punishment as justified, but when the Familiar takes the law into his own hands and acts as both judge and executioner it is another matter."

Her eyes met his fairly for the first time.

"Executioner! That is a strange word to employ!" she exclaimed, her lips faltering as she realized from his expression that he had used it intentionally. "Will you be kind enough to tell me the entire truth, sir?"

"It is the worst that you have imagined, Mizzi," answered Tommy quietly. "Your brother was foully dealt with; he was drugged, and, either by carelessness or design, he was given an overdose."

The Magyar is given to dramatic demonstration of the emotions, and I anticipated almost anything in the way of an outburst, but the girl had been

trained in a strict school, and she received the announcement without flinching.

"A fatal overdose?" she asked, and when Tommy nodded a mute assent she plied him with questions as to details, inquiring particularly about the effects of the drug as we had seen them. Her voice was low and even, and only the vindictive set of her lips and the flash in her dark eyes suggested anything but an impersonal and academic interest. Her questions were apt and to the point, betraying the fact that the drug which had puzzled the hospital physicians was well known to her, and in Tommy's very accurate description of its effects she found a full confirmation of his suspicions.

"You are entirely correct in everything you have stated, sir," she said quietly, when the questioning was finished. "Both my brother and I have been long in the service of the Familiar. He placed me in the suite of her royal highness; he employed my brother in his most delicate operations. The drug which killed my brother was known only to the Familiar; it must be a brewing of his master, the devil. It is colorless, tasteless, odorless, and its immediate effect is to stimulate an intense craving for strong alcoholic drink. That makes its administration difficult to detect, for its effects are usually attributed to drunkenness, and when it is skillfully employed in proper amount the results are no more serious. You can guess what a valuable weapon it proved in the hands of the Familiar, and he had used it so long that he made no mistake. My brother was intentionally murdered. I am entirely at your disposition, sir; it will be time enough to mourn for him after he is avenged, and the Familiar's treachery releases me from his service."

Now, to the mind of a sane and reputable American, the career which this handsome and intelligent young woman had chosen possessed about as much of dignity as the business of a police stool pigeon, but within the next hour we learned that those who followed it in the underground diplomacy and court intrigue of Europe regarded it as an honorable profession governed by an exact and strict code of ethics.

The Familiar had placed himself beyond the pale by his treachery, and Mizzi tacitly swore a vendetta against him for the murder of her brother, but she assumed that entirely as a personal matter and indignantly refused to answer questions which would identify her associates and enable Tommy to strike through the heart of their organization. She readily admitted that she knew practically all of its members; that she was in possession of their private codes, that she was thoroughly familiar with the secret machinery of the wonderful organization which he had elaborated, but while both the archduchess and the Countess Czernac aided Tommy until long after midnight in putting her through a rigorous third degree, they were unable to break through her obstinate silence.

As petulant as a spoiled child, the archduchess finally withdrew to her own compartment, irritably rejecting the services which Mizzi respectfully volunteered and imperiously beckoning to the countess to accompany her. The door had hardly closed after them before Mizzi dropped the mask of indifference which had concealed her emotion and turned to Tommy with flashing eyes.

"You have badgered me unmercifully and I have submitted without rebellion, but the necessity for meekness no longer exists!" she exclaimed. "I must know the truth; the truth which you dared not tell the archduchess. Who is the woman responsible for all of this deviltry?"

Tommy hesitated, looking apprehensively at the door through which the

ladies had passed, and, walking across the little salon, Mizzi stood with her back against it.

"There will be no interruption!" she said positively. "Time is short, and we can't afford to waste it. In fifteen minutes we shall reach the Austrian frontier, and before that we must understand each other. You are planning to gain audience with the emperor, but one word from me at the frontier and you will disappear from the knowledge of the world as utterly as John Orth vanished from human ken when he was apprehended in Strassburg. I believe that I know the answer to the question I asked and that I can name the woman. It is Miss Ethel Carteret?"

"You are exceptionally well informed," admitted Tommy.

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"No better than a score of the secret political agents who have been warned to be in readiness to deal with her," she answered. "I know that she sailed from New York under the passports of the Countess Czernac and in the company of the Familiar; I have been kept informed of much that has been going on in New York—of many things which you do not suspect. She must be a wonderful woman—or a pretty fool. My brother was the keenest-witted man in the Familiar's service, but she turned his head, and the Familiar himself, a cold-blooded, intellectual machine, who has never before betrayed a human passion, has sacrificed everything for her."

"Is it a *human* passion, Mizzi?" asked Tommy sharply. Snapped out like the crack of a whip, that question produced a greater effect than any of its predecessors, and Mizzi's face was white, her large eyes distended with fear as she crossed the swaying floor and sank limply into a chair.

"Tell me of this woman!" she exclaimed, in a voice from which all defiance had vanished. "Was my brother deluded, or is she really what he believed her to be, honest, sincere, and—straight?"

"All of that, Mizzi," answered Tommy quietly. "So honest, so sincere, and so straight that she had no conception of the personal risk she was running. She forgot her own personality in the fascination of the new game which she entered so recklessly; she had no realization of the danger to herself as a woman. If it were simply a contest of wits between a newspaper reporter trying to dig up a big story and clever antagonists interested in keeping it covered, I should not be anxious for her safety, even if her adversaries were unscrupulous as to ways and means. Even the Familiar, the 'cold-blooded, intellectual machine,' scheming, plotting, and using all of his secret power and the resources of his wonderful organization to foil her professional quest, would be an ordinary risk of the game; but when the personal equation in the shape of a beautiful woman——"

"It is not a *human* passion, and you have just cause for anxiety for her personal safety, sir," she interrupted, unable to repress a tremor which suggested fear of a nameless horror as she reverted to the original question which had roused it. "It is just such a manifestation of something which has lain dormant in him as I have always feared. I cannot explain it, but I know that many women, who have been associated with him, have instinctively felt the same thing; an intangible but overpowering fear. Your question almost gave it a name, sir; it is not a human passion, and God help the woman who has aroused it!"

"Will *you* aid me to help her, Mizzi?"

She hesitated, frankly studying his face as if searching for a betrayal of insincerity or treachery which must

have been all too common in her curious life. The inspection apparently satisfied her, for she nodded assent.

"You will need all of the assistance you can get," she answered guardedly. "If I am to help it must be in my own way, unquestioned and unsuspected, no matter how much appearances may be against me. You have made your plan, and it is a good one; you must see the emperor and be certain that the Familiar's official powers are revoked. I shall leave you at the frontier; I have my own work to do, and I must do it alone. There is but one condition: when the reckoning comes the Familiar is to be left to me; he must answer for my brother's murder, and he must answer to me."

Tommy glanced ruefully from the passage where Sullivan stood guard to the door through which the ladies had disappeared.

"There are two claimants for his scalp ahead of you, Mizzi: the countess has a personal account to collect, and Sullivan is looking for a return engagement, to say nothing of the grouch which the archduchess——"

"Mine is a blood debt, and there can be but one payment!" she interrupted passionately. "The archduchess will forget at the first flattery from another empty-headed courtier; the countess has suffered only in her personal pride, and Sullivan would hesitate to touch such a pitiful thing as the Familiar will become." She rose from her chair as the train slowed down after a warning whistle from the locomotive.

"You will make such explanation as you see fit to her royal highness," she continued grimly. "You know how far you can trust her—it is needless to warn you to trust no one else. There is but one thing of which I should remind you: if you wish to save Miss Carteret, forget everything else. The fate of John Orth does not concern you, and you have no time to waste. War is only a question of days, perhaps of hours, and, when it comes, the rights of individuals will be forgotten. Remain quietly in the car until it reaches Vienna; I will see that you are not interfered with at the frontier. I will communicate with you when you have seen the emperor—and, until then—*auf wiedersehen!*"

She brushed past Sullivan, who had been intructed only to prevent the entrance of any one from without, and was on the station platform as the wheels stopped turning. Looking through a chink in the window curtains, we saw her pause for an instant to say a word to the officer commanding the customs guards whose fixed bayonets unceremoniously herded the other passengers into the examination rooms, a word which changed his brusque officiousness to a respectful attention and brought his hand to his *kepi* in salute as he drew aside to let her pass unquestioned to the line of waiting droskys.

"An efficient woman—a mighty efficient woman!" commented Tommy, when she disappeared. "I shall sleep better to-night for having met her—if we are still on board this car when the train starts!" There was evident cause for the qualification, for at a sharp command from the officer a squad of the gray-coated soldiers had moved to each end of our car. The other carriages were already emptied, for at the frontier all passengers must disembark and pass through the examination room, which has one door on Italian and the other on Austrian soil. We waited anxiously, expecting the order to disembark and give an account of ourselves, but as the minutes passed we realized that Mizzi had played fair, and the soldiers were posted for our protection from the inquisitive secret-service officers who searched the adjoining coaches to make sure that no one was hiding from the inquisition.

Tommy gave an exclamation of relief as the last traveler was boosted into place and the train slowly gathered headway.

"It was a gamble, but we win!" he said triumphantly. "Taking one consideration with another, I believe that the Familiar is about to get all that is coming to him—and I'd rather take a chance with a jungle-bred tigress than with that Magyar girl when the time comes that she can forget the discipline which his whip has imposed."

Fortunately the archduchess did not deign to appear until our train was entering the Vienna station the following morning, and she was speedily involved in too much ceremony to permit of inquiry about the disappearance of Mizzi. A scandalized chamberlain had apparently kept the telegraph wires from Venice hot, and a dozen court officials were awaiting her arrival. A strip of red velvet carpet was stretched from the car platform to a georgeous court carriage, and a detachment of guards kept the way clear for her passage. Tommy and I remained unobtrusively in the background, but she halted abruptly and motioned to us to join her.

"You gentlemen will be my guests," she said. "I shall arrange at once for an audience and send word of the hour to your apartment."

A moment later, she had whirled away in the carriage, accompanied by the Countess Czernac and escorted by outriders; but the back of the official to whose care she had intrusted us—a back which seemed provided with ball-bearing joints in the presence of feminine royalty—suddenly stiffened. His collar insignia and the brilliant red facings of his uniform identified him as a colonel attached to the general staff, and there was a suggestion of command in his invitation to accompany him as he led the way to a side entrance of the station. He was suave and courteous, but the swarming police officers were even more solicitous to keep the crowd away from us than they had been to maintain a free exit for the archduchess, and when Sullivan attempted to join us they unceremoniously pushed him back. Tommy stopped, to the very evident annoyance of our escort.

"That man belongs to our party," he said as Sullivan made forcible verbal protest, which he was manifestly quite ready to back up with his eloquent fists. "We'll take him along, if you please."

The colonel shook his head. "I am sorry, but he was not mentioned in my instructions; but I will volunteer to see that he is cared for," he answered. He called to one of the police officials and said a few words in German, but when Tommy started back to explain to Sullivan he stepped squarely in front of him.

"It is attended to, sir!" he said curtly. "I must ask you not to delay."

A half dozen of the police officers drew nearer, but in spite of the display of force, Tommy called to Sullivan over the human barrier, instructing him to go to the Hotel Romacher and wait for us. The colonel stood aside for us to enter a luxurious limousine, sharing the seat facing us with a man obviously of the secret-service type, while a uniformed police officer jumped to the seat beside the chauffeur. Tommy looked inquiringly at the colonel as the machine started without spoken order, for our course was assuredly not laid for the Hofburg.

"May I ask where we are going—if we have any choice in the matter or if we are prisoners?" he demanded.

The colonel's smile was intended to be reassuring, but the detective's grin was derisive.

"I am instructed to escort you to military headquarters, which, since the call for general mobilization, happens to be wherever the emperor is in residence; to-day it is Schoenbrun," an-

swered the colonel. "You will, of course, understand that I am on duty —carrying out the orders of my superiors without questioning." There were just enough of emphasis on the final words to convey a courteous hint that a similar reticence on our part would be appreciated, and he followed them with casual remarks about the unusual heat and the probability of rain.

"I trust that we shall have the pleasure of seeing our friend, Count Amyar Festonyi," ventured Tommy, after the weather as a conversational topic had been exhausted.

"I have an idea that you may," answered the colonel, the corners of his mouth twitching from his effort to suppress a smile. "By the way, may I ask if you are armed? Since the orders for mobilization and the proclamation of martial law there is a very severe penalty for carrying concealed weapons." Tommy's eyes narrowed as he produced an automatic pistol, which the plain-clothes man appropriated, together with its fellow from my pocket.

"Thank you. That may save you from embarrassment later," said the colonel quietly. "The situation is critical, and the whole atmosphere is charged with suspicion since the Sarajevo tragedy." Again he emphasized the final words, and the detective watched us narrowly, his observation rewarded by a mocking smile on Tommy's lips.

"It certainly does look like rain!" he exclaimed derisively.

The colonel flushed uncomfortably, and the detective's eyes dropped significantly to Tommy's wrists, a glance which Tommy answered by extending them close together.

"I know you would like to—it's an incurable habit of your profession the world over," he said contemptuously. "Colonel, there is no use in beating about the bush with us; I am entirely willing to give truthful answers to frank questions."

"You will undoubtedly have the opportunity later!" snapped out the colonel irritably, adding a few curt words in an unintelligible Austrian dialect which made the detective squirm uncomfortably.

Tommy smiled as he settled back in the luxurious cushions, watching the scowling faces of our companions through narrowed lids with a scrutiny which made them welcome the end of our journey as a relief.

Schoenbrun, one of the most beautiful of the Austrian royal palaces, was closely guarded by cavalry patrols and a double cordon of infantry pickets, but our car passed through the lines unchallenged. The imperial standard proclaimed the residence of the emperor, but there was no visible evidence of the presence of the court. Officials there were in hundreds, but the gorgeous, gold-laced uniforms of reviews and maneuvers were discarded for the somber, businesslike garb of war in which only initiates could distinguish the crack imperial bodyguard from a humble regiment of the line. It was stern business with the frills cut off; an army center down to the brass tacks of modern efficiency. Dispatch bearers were coming and going constantly, but instead of spurring lathered and panting steeds they bent low over the wide handlebars of motor cycles, and, even as we arrived, a monoplane swooped down from the skies in a graceful glide, a natty officer of the intelligence department jumping from it and hurrying into the castle with his report as the airman brought the bird-like machine to a stop on the smooth lawn where a half dozen others rested.

Our escort conducted us immediately into a large salon which was evidently used as an anteroom, for a dozen officers of the highest rank were gathered there, their idleness suggesting that

they were waiting their turns to submit reports or to receive orders, their eyes constantly turning in restless eageness toward a door at the far end before which an imperial adjutant sat at a desk, a list of names before him, a telephone receiver at his ear. The detective said a single word to this guardian of the portal, who nodded curtly in acknowledgment and repeated that word into the telephone.

It must have been the Austrian equivalent for open sesame, for almost instantly the heavy door swung open noiselessly, and our colonel motioned to us to pass through. Beside him we traversed a gallery guarded by both sentries and secret-service men. At the end, an officer raised his drawn saber in salute, and a page threw open another door, admitting us to a plainly furnished workroom, and that for which we had schemed and contrived, an audience with Franz Joseph, King of Hungary and Emperor of Austria.

CHAPTER X.

Tommy Williams and I had had audience with the Austrian ruler not many weeks before. On that occasion Franz Joseph had been kindly and benevolent; buoyed up by the belief that fate had at last tired of persecuting him and that his few remaining years would be peaceful and happy; for he was looking forward to the return of the long-lost John Orth, a favorite whose mysterious disappearance had been a continuing grief. The empire to which he had devoted his life was happy and prosperous, and an able and popular heir apparent stood ready to lighten his labors and continue the policies which promised to restore the Hapsburgs to their former glory. And then, like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, had come the brutal tragedy of Sarajevo to bring his air castles tumbling about his ears in ruins, to add the last straw to the burden of sorrows which had bowed his broad shoulders and printed the indellible furrows of grief about his eyes.

He was face to face with a crisis—an inevitable conflict in which defeat meant the renewal of civil war, the dismemberment of his empire, decades of misery to his subjects. But Franz Joseph is no weakling, and the threat of disaster had proved a veritable elixir of youth. Twenty years seemed to have dropped from his shoulders, which were again squarely erect beneath the epaulets; fire had rekindled in the gray-blue eyes which gazed fearlessly at the gathering storm clouds, and there was no senile tremor in the hand which signed the call to millions of trained men to rally to his standard for the defense of the fatherland.

It was difficult to recognize in this soldierly, alert commander of legions whose stern eyes looked at us fiercely across a great desk strewn with maps and official reports, the jovial and kindly old man whose age and infirmities had appealed to our sympathies so strongly but a few weeks before, and I was suddenly uncomfortably reminded of the truth of Tommy's favorite maxim that the favor of princes is fickle; for there was menace in his attitude.

He made a perfunctory acknowledgment of the colonel's salute and the detective's low obeisance, and then dismissed them with an imperative gesture; maintaining silence until the door had closed after them.

"I assume that you gentlemen have something to report, or you would hardly have ventured within the borders of Austria!" he said brusquely. "I warn you that it will be unsafe to waste time in excuses. Where is John Orth?"

Tommy faced him, unperturbed. "Your majesty desires facts—not guesses?" he asked quietly.

"The absolute truth; if such a thing exists!" exclaimed the emperor an-

grily. "Count Amyar Festonyi has told me enough of fiction; a child's tale of a kidnaping at Strassburg; a story which made my ambassador to Berlin ridiculous when he demanded an explanation."

"None the less the tale is true," insisted Tommy.

"Impossible!" stormed the emperor. "No one would dare arrest a member of my house without authority from my lips or hand. Johan Salvator is an archduke of Austria, and his rank would protect him from such indignity; as much in Germany as in his own country."

"Certainly, if his rank were known," said Tommy quickly. "But you forget that it was as Mr. Gheradi he was known in New York; and it was understood when he left there with Count Amyar that they were to travel incognito until they reached Vienna. I imagine that on a request made by your chancellor the German secret police would have arrested him readily."

The emperor leaned forward, his hand poised above the bell on his desk.

"Do you realize that such an explanation is a tacit accusation of treachery against my most trusted officials?" he demanded sternly.

Tommy bowed a respectful assent. "We should call it that in America; but I believe that it is considered a legitimate piece of strategy in European diplomacy," he answered. "If you include the man we know as Major von Mulendorf among your most trusted officials, I haven't the slightest hesitation in making a direct accusation of treachery. It was upon his advice that John Orth was spirited away from the railway station in Strassburg. I had that acknowledgment from his own lips; but I will give him the credit for believing at that time that he was working for your best interests. It was not until later that he yielded to temptation and betrayed you, and it is because of that treachery that we are here. We came to claim justice, your majesty——"

"Pardon me; you were *brought* here to receive justice—and you will get it in full measure!" interrupted the emperor, as his hand fell on the bell. "Major von Mulendorf acted upon my orders; he was shrewd enough to suspect your conspiracy; and your confederate, the Countess Czernac, is being brought here in his custody. You will be detained until their arrival."

An orderly answered his summons, and a moment later our colonel entered and motioned to us to follow him; but Tommy disregarded the gesture and remained motionless, a smile on his lips as he gazed fearlessly at the scowling face across the desk.

"Will your majesty be good enough to ask the colonel a single question before sending us to a dungeon—will you ask him the name of the lady in attendance upon her royal highness, the Archduchess Valerie, when she arrived in Vienna this morning?" he said quietly.

The colonel had already taken a step toward him, his hand outstretched to place him under a formal arrest; but he halted at an impatient gesture of assent from the emperor.

"It was the Countess Czernac, sire!" said the colonel, and the answer brought an expression of amazement, in which fear seemed curiously intermingled, to the emperor's face.

An absolute silence fell over the room, a silence in which a commotion in the anteroom was audible, and Tommy's smile became distinctly triumphant.

"I believe that your majesty will soon have entirely satisfactory confirmation of that statement," he ventured.

The words were hardly spoken before the door opened and the archduchess burst into the room like a whirlwind. She was evidently furi-

ously angry, and the colonel discreetly stepped quickly from her path as she advanced toward the emperor, who rose from his chair to greet her, but carefully retained his position behind his desk. For the moment she utterly disregarded our presence; but when the colonel again motioned us to follow him as he backed toward the door, she wheeled about and looked at him with an expression which brought him automatically to a rigid posture of attention, his heels together, his hand at the peak of his kepi in salute.

"Will you kindly inform me since when it has been permissible for your soldiers to bar the entrance of a princess of the blood to your presence, sire, and by what authority the secret police dare lay hands upon a lady of my suite?" she demanded. "The Countess Czernac was placed under arrest in your anteroom, and one of your adjutants refused me entrance until I was forced to box his ears to teach him his place!"

The emperor's fingers fumbled nervously with the row of multi-colored ribbons which stretched across his tunic.

"My dear, he deserves the Golden Fleece for his resistance in the face of overwhelming odds," he said soothingly. "Affairs of state are——"

"And I suppose those miserable police spies will be ennobled for dragging a helpless woman off to prison!" she interrupted scornfully.

The half-rueful, placating smile disappeared from the emperor's lips, and his face was very grave as he motioned to her to be seated.

"There seems to be something which needs explanation here," he said, and there was a quiet authority in his voice which impressed even his spoiled and willful favorite. "I approved the order for the arrest of the Countess Czernac; but that order was transmitted to Major von Mulendorf to be executed upon the high seas, and I have received his acknowledgment and the report that she was in his custody. It is not possible that there should be a confusion of identity; his report which led to the issuing of that order of arrest was explicit, and only this morning we received his assurance that he had carried out the order and that she was under arrest at—well, at a point sufficiently remote to make it impossible that she should have arrived here today." He looked inquiringly at Tommy as he finished speaking.

"It would be very simple for your majesty to prove that Major von Mulendorf has made a false report," suggested Tommy respectfully. "If with your own eyes you see the Countess Czernac here, it will convince you that she could not have been a prisoner on your cruiser *Cracow* in the Adriatic this morning, and once convinced of that, you might wish to hear the explanation which we are able to furnish."

"Colonel, give orders that the woman arrested a few minutes since be brought here at once!" said the emperor curtly, a satirical smile coming to his lips as he studied Tommy's face. "Mr. Williams, will you be good enough to tell me how you know that Major von Mulendorf is on the *Cracow?*"

"I should prefer to wait until I can tell you that as a part of the entire story," answered Tommy. "I trust that the statement is justified; that he *is* on the *Cracow,* and that he may be kept there until you can communicate revised orders to the cruiser's commander."

The emperor frowned as he picked up one of the reports from the desk and glanced over it, and from the fact that he glanced from the paper to the clock I judged that it must be a transcript of the Familiar's report. Tommy's absolute confidence and fearlessness must have impressed him more than he had acknowledged, and I sus-

pected that he was making a mental calculation of time which would give him the *Cracow's* position. A moment later, the frown left his face, which became suddenly eloquent of amazement as the Countess Czernac entered, and, after a low curtsy, stood facing him with downcast eyes. For a moment he gazed at her incredulously, and then, grasping a pencil, he wrote rapidly an order which he handed to the colonel for immediate transmission.

"By St. Stephan, before I am a day older a band of tricksters will learn that I still rule in Austria!" he exclaimed furiously. "I have acted upon your hint, sir," he continued, addressing Tommy. "I have ordered the captain of the *Cracow* to proceed at once to Trieste, and Major von Mulendorf and his prisoner will be brought here under secure escort. And now let me have your story, sir, and may the Lord have mercy on you if you tell me more or less than the truth!"

For the next hour Mr. Thomas Williams held the center of the stage, with the spotlight focused squarely upon him; for Franz Joseph was quick to recognize his sincerity, and let him relate the facts in his own way without prompting or suggestion. It was evident that the emperor had been informed of everything which had occurred before the cable brought the news of the Sarajevo tragedy to New York; for he made mute acknowledgment of the accuracy of Tommy's statements; but it was just as evident that he had been kept in ignorance of the secret orders which had been transmitted to Major von Mulendorf subsequently. His eyes fairly blazed as he listened to the repetition of the Familiar's frank confession that it was by his orders that John Orth had been intercepted and his brutally cynical admission that he would order him killed without the slightest compunction if such a step became necessary to prevent the emperor from proposing him as the successor to the murdered heir apparent.

Tommy told the story consecutively and simply, without a trace of exaggeration. He was scrupulously fair in repeating the Familiar's arguments to justify his radical change of course; arguments which appealed in a measure to the emperor's sense of justice; for he listened attentively and apparently weighed every word carefully.

The Archduchess Valerie, during the early part of the recital, was a listless and frankly bored auditor; she was notoriously indifferent to the purely political intrigue of the Hapsburg court; but when Miss Carteret's name was first mentioned she became suddenly attentive, and her face was a study as the American girl became the center about which the whole intrigue revolved.

To the emperor that relation was entirely credible; for bitter experience in his own royal household had taught him the dangerous power of a beautiful woman, and Tommy's verbal description did full justice to Miss Carteret's personal appearance and charm. Fed on flattery from her cradle, Valerie had found it easy to believe that infatuation for her had led the Familiar from the path of official fidelity, and there was an expression of scornful disbelief on her face as she listened to Tommy's recital of Colonel von Hohenstein's devotion to the American girl, the love which had led Sulki to risk his life, the mad passion which had tempted the cold, calculating, scheming Familiar to forget the traditions of a lifetime.

It was with a feeling of relief that I saw belief and confidence grow in the emperor's eyes as the narration neared the end; for I realized that resentment was breeding enmity in Valerie's heart. She would probably have indignantly denied that such a thing as jealousy prompted it; for she could not

acknowledge a rivalry between an Austrian archduchess and an American girl who worked for her living; but nevertheless she pouted visibly when Tommy expatiated upon Ethel Carteret's beauty and smiled scornfully when he described the mischief it had wrought. Perhaps the Familiar did not gain a champion; but it was evident that we had lost an ally, and I knew that we should need all the help that we could get.

For, convincing as Tommy's story was, and justified as were his accusations of treachery by the facts he had related, it was apparent that the peril menacing John Orth was the only thing which caused the emperor particular concern. Threatened by a war with powerful neighbors, wearied by the unending task of reconciling the jealousies of rival commanders that his loosely bound empire might present a united front to the enemy, facing the inevitable expenditure of rivers of blood and millions of treasure, the peril of an American girl was not of great importance in the imperial estimation.

The revelation that the officials in his chancellery had tricked him, withheld information, and issued orders without his authority, was irritating; but in his heart he knew that in thwarting his personal desire they were acting in good faith for what they believed to be the best interests of the empire. Theoretically an autocrat, he had learned during his troubled reign of more than a half century that his individual will was powerless when it conflicted with the honest convictions of his advisers in matters of public policy. It was within his power to dismiss and punish summarily the ministers who had deceived him; but following such arbitrary action, no strong men could be induced to accept their portfolios, and Austro-Hungary, under the guidance of weaklings, could not survive. Even the Familiar had rendered such valuable service in the past that he hesitated to condemn him unheard in this very troubled present.

In ordering his arrest the emperor had acted upon an angry impulse; but as he listened to Tommy's story he had gained time for reflection, and when it was ended and the evidence was all in, it was apparent that in gaining the audience on which our hopes were builded we had not won the easy victory which we expected so confidently. One advantage we had gained; his suspicions of our honesty had been dispelled, and animosity had given way to a certain degree of renewed friendliness; but Tommy's eyes narrowed as he watched the emperor's face in the silence which followed the conclusion of his monologue. The lost years had suddenly returned, and it was no longer the rejuvenated commander of the legions marching to defend his frontiers; but the withered, worldly-wise, and coldly calculating old bargainer in men whose verdict we anxiously awaited. It was the Archduchess Valerie who broke that silence with a scornful laugh.

"I trust that this marvelously beautiful compatriot of yours may be brought here speedily!" she exclaimed maliciously. "I am curious to see the woman whose fascination is so fatally powerful. What a pity that we have to rely simply upon a verbal description—that you have no picture of her!"

Tommy's eyes looked through the narrowest of slits as he turned to face her.

"Fortunately, as it interests your royal highness, I have a likeness of Miss Carteret," he said quietly, as he took from his pocket the sketch he had made in his New York studio. "It does not do her justice; but——" In her eagerness, she fairly snatched it from his hand. His statement was truthful; clever as the sketch was, it did not do its subject justice; but he

had caught and imprisoned on the paper enough to suggest her beauty and peculiar charm.

Valerie studied it for a moment, and then tossed it indifferently on the emperor's desk.

"The skill of the artist impresses me more than the alleged beauty of the model," she commented, challenge in the eyes which looked at him intently. "I should like to see more of your work, sir; to see what you could do with a subject worthy of your talent which that sketch reveals," she continued, coquetry gaining the upper hand.

Tommy was watching alertly, and would not have missed so obvious a chance to reinstate himself in her good graces; but the flattery which trembled on his lips was checked by an exclamation from Franz Joseph, whose hand had mechanically picked up the sketch.

God knows what long-forgotten memory was roused by some suggestion in the likeness of this American girl whom he had never seen; but it must have been a powerful one; for he gazed at the sketch as a man fascinated. He was a Hapsburg, and during the earlier years of his rule over the gayest court of Europe he had foregone none of the privileges of place. Unconscious of his audience, his lips murmured a woman's name—a name which I shall not set down, for it was that of a famous beauty of long ago, a name which recalled one of the grimmest tragedies of the many which mark the history of the hidden and private life of the members of the Hapsburg house. Only the official details had been made public, the announcement that her body, horribly mutilated, supposedly by a wild beast, had been discovered by gamekeepers in a thicket of the imperial hunting preserve. Gossip had already connected her name with the emperor, and posthumous scandal whispered that she had met her death while stealing through the forest to keep a tryst with her royal lover in a near-by hunting lodge. There was a pathetic, wistful expression in the emperor's eyes when he looked up from the sketch, a tremor in his voice when he spoke.

"It is true—this is a faithful picture of the woman whom Major von Mulendorf is escorting here?" he asked.

Tommy looked significantly at the clock before answering.

"Of the lady who I *hope* is being escorted here in honor and safety," he said gravely. "There has been time enough to receive a reply, your majesty."

A tap on the bell was quickly followed by the entrance of the colonel.

"Sire, Captain von Falconberg, commanding the *Cracow,* regrets to report that he is unable to carry out your order," he said. "He received it by wireless at sea an hour after landing Major von Mulendorf and the lady at Cattaro. The chief of the secret police at Cattaro reports that they left for Sarajevo immediately after landing, the major announcing that they would go from there to Budapest and Vienna."

The emperor dismissed him; the report had been a keen disappointment; but he shrugged his shoulders.

"For many reasons which I cannot explain, I can do nothing more; you will have to await the major's arrival," he said.

Tommy's face was white, his lips set, as he reached out and picked up his sketch. The emperor watched him in amazed silence as he turned it over and, with marvelously rapid strokes of his pencil, drew another picture on the back. Stroke by stroke, I saw that sketch develop into a powerful, but horrible, caricature of the Familiar. It was unmistakably in his likeness; but the finished product was a repulsive ape, the inordinately long arms suggesting tremendous physical strength, the distorted face eloquent of most brutish

ferocity. Standing erect and defiant, Tommy held the sketch of Miss Carteret before the emperor's face.

"Will your majesty repeat that we can do nothing but wait, knowing that in the wilds of Herzegovina and Bosnia this is in the power of"—he turned the paper quickly, exposing the caricature—"this?" he demanded passionately.

For a moment Franz Joseph gazed, with horror-stricken eyes, at the hideous thing, and when he covered them with his hands and shrank back in his chair I knew that he was trying to shut out some horrible vision of the past which Tommy's devilish ingenuity had conjured. A smile of triumph came to Tommy's lips as he realized that his last trump card had taken the trick, but having won it, he was sufficiently wise to let well enough alone. For a time which seemed interminable the ticking of the clock was the only audible sound in the room; for curiosity held even the irrepressible Valerie silent until the emperor dropped his hands from his face and rose from his chair so violently that it overturned, with a crash.

His face was pale from the wave of emotion which had swept over him; but he was again strangely rejuvenated. His eyes were flashing, his head erect above squared shoulders, his lips set in stern determination, and he brought his withered fist down on the desk with a force which sent the papers flying.

"No, by St. Stephan, we shall not wait!" he exclaimed fiercely. "As through a glass darkly I seem to see the true explanation of a horrible mystery of the past, and I shall act now if it costs me my empire!"

CHAPTER XI.

Under strong emotion aroused by the memory of a mysterious tragedy of his past, Franz Joseph made that dramatic pledge; but he quickly realized the very practical difficulties which would make it difficult of fulfillment. In sixty years of rulership, the hottest-headed man could learn the wisdom of caution and the value of compromise, and he had profited by experience.

Every official in the vast empire, from the prime minister to the burgomaster of the most remote and obscure village, derived his authority from the imperial commission, and in theory it was well within the emperor's power to issue an order commanding each and every one of them to arrest the Familiar on sight; but, in spite of the divine right of rulership which he claimed, he knew that such an order would be futile. In matters of state, the imperial advisers through whom it would be transmitted were in entire accord with the Familiar, his policy in dealing with John Orth was identical with theirs. He had been of tremendous service in the past, his peculiar abilities and the wonderful organization which he controlled might be of inestimable value in the threatening future.

With all the will in the world to lay him by the heels, the emperor was unable to do more than issue a general order to all naval and military officers directing them to disregard requests for assistance from secret and diplomatic agents unless they produced authority signed by his own hand. All previous commissions which had been issued by the ministers of state and police, empowering their agents to demand such assistance in making arrests or guarding prisoners, were revoked, which, in a measure, clipped the Familiar's wings, although, in view of the use he had made of the *Cracow*, it seemed rather like locking the stable door after the horse had been stolen. He looked earnestly at Tommy after the colonel left the room to transmit that order, studying his face with eyes in which

suspicion gave way to confidence as the minutes passed.

And then, without speaking, he took up his pen, and writing a half dozen lines on parchment, signed them and attested the signature with a seal from his signet ring.

"I rely upon your discretion to make no use of this paper unless it is absolutely necessary," he said simply, as he handed it to Tommy. "It gives you the power which I have taken from my own subjects, it is a free pardon for any crime you might commit upon Austrian soil; but in trusting to you I have no fear that disloyalty will add to my bitter store of disappointments in my judgment of men. I would give much to go in your place; but so much of life as remains to me belongs to my people, and I cannot desert them in their hour of extremity. I know that your first thought is for the safety of the woman in his power; but I trust to your generosity to do what you may to insure the safe return of John Orth." He hesitated for a moment, his hand unconsciously clutching the hilt of his saber.

"By St. Stephan, I should die happy if for one moment I could stand face to face with that ape in human form and ask him what manner of death a woman died in the Forest of Semmering!" he exclaimed passionately, and then, as if fearing further self-betrayal, his extended hand abruptly signaled the termination of the long audience.

Tommy looked him squarely in the eyes as he took it.

"It will not be from lack of trying if I fail to ask him that question in your majesty's name," he answered quietly, and as Franz Joseph looked long and earnestly at the confident, grave face, the last lingering doubt died from his old eyes, which had witnessed enough of disloyalty to breed a profound distrust in human nature.

Valerie rose from her chair with the evident intention of accompanying us as we backed toward the door; but the emperor detained her with a word, although his dismissal had included the Countess Czernac. Even from that closely guarded room some inkling that we had been restored to the imperial favor must have escaped; for the sentries stood at attention as we hurried past them, and the swarming secret-service men who had eyed us so suspiciously when we entered, virtually as prisoners, withdrew discreetly into the background. At the great doorway, the countess hesitated; but the colonel, who stood beside the waiting limousine, motioned to her to enter with us.

How or when he had received his orders I could not imagine; but in a few courteous words he informed Tommy that he was entirely at his disposition to aid in preventing delay through the stringent military regulations; a service which was eagerly accepted and which proved most helpful. It was largely through his assistance that in less than two hours we were on board of a special train, eating a most satisfying luncheon as we whirled, at express speed, toward Trieste. Austria was straining every nerve to mobilize her vast army, and ordinary traffic had practically been suspended; but troop trains and ammunition vans were held on the sidings to give us a clear track as we raced to meet the *Terpsichore* which the wireless had summoned. We had picked up Sullivan, our East Side aid, just in time to save him from the hands of the municipal police; for irritated by the close attention of the two secret-service men who had been delegated to watch him when we were arrested, he had disposed of them after the rough-and-ready methods of the Bowery. A word from the colonel quieted the uproar in the hotel café where the battle had occurred, and another from Tommy squelched the

truculent tendencies of the pugilist, who was announcing his intention of cleaning out the place unless they left him alone.

It was also the colonel who settled the status of the Countess Czernac under orders from the emperor which were handed to him when we reached Vienna. The language was guarded; but between the lines we could read that his direction that she should accompany us was dictated by kindly thought of the woman we were trying to rescue; for if we succeeded she might be grateful for the companionship and care of one of her own sex. Tommy accepted that order without comment; but when I suggested that we might save time in the end by waiting in Vienna until Mizzi communicated with us he shook his head.

"From now on we're not waiting anywhere for any one until we catch up with the Familiar!" he said positively, and my bones ached in anticipation; for Perseus of the Winged Shoes would have appeared a laggard when compared with Mr. Thomas Williams in a hurry. "If Mizzi doesn't join us within a few hours I shall be surprised—and I'm not looking for surprises at this early stage of the game. If she is worth her salt to us, she will find us; there isn't room in the membership of this expedition for any one who has to be dry-nursed or supplied with time-tables and diagrams—and I miss my guess if she is the kind to need them."

His "guessing" was always the result of careful deduction and—when it dealt with probable human action—his almost uncanny power of putting himself in another's place; so I subsided without further protest, so confident that he had reasoned correctly that I was hardly surprised when we found Mizzi on the landing stage at Trieste. She was chatting with Teddy Royan, and, with only a very casual greeting, she joined us, quite as a matter of course, in the cockpit of the launch which was waiting to carry us to the outer harbor, where the *Terpsichore* swung at moorings, with black smoke pouring from her funnels.

As to ways and means of acquiring information, Mizzi was reticent; but she needed no enlightenment concerning our movements since she parted from us at the Austrian frontier. The peculiar grapevine telegraph system had kept her so well informed that she had been able to time her own arrival to a nicety, and the other information which she had gathered fully justified Tommy's faith in her competence. She had evidently availed herself of the very complete and widespread organization with which she had become intimately acquainted in the Familiar's service; but she contented herself with stating the results, which were not altogether comforting; for the Familiar had vanished from the ken of his most trusted subordinates from the moment he left Cattaro with the pseudo Countess Czernac. Never before had such a thing happened, and it was ominous that he should virtually desert his post at such a critical moment. Mizzi's smile was very grim when Tommy suggested that our only chance for success was to follow his trail from Cattaro.

"No living man has ever been clever enough to defeat his schemes by following his trail!" she exclaimed contemptuously. "I have been educated in his school. The only chance is to intercept him; not to follow."

Tommy accepted the correction with a nod of assent.

"That's just what we shall attempt—if you will kindly lay your cards on the table," he said quietly. "Here is an ordnance map of the country, and if you will indicate the particular place to which he is traveling, we'll get there at a gait which would make Pegasus look like a selling plater." He spread

the map on the salon table, and taking the pencil from his hand, Mizzi, without the slightest hesitation, made a mark upon it so energetically that the sharpened point pierced the heavy paper.

"There!" she said confidently, and together Tommy and I leaned over to study the possible routes to the point she had so unmistakably indicated. The map was accurate, and drawn to so large a scale that even small villages were noted in bewildering profusion; but the perforation was made in the center of a space which was free from the richly consonated names. It was near the Servian frontier, but a few miles from the junction of the Save and Drina Rivers, and apparently in rough and broken country. Tommy's eyes were narrowed when he looked up from the map.

"Is your information reliable?" he demanded suspiciously.

Mizzi shrugged her shoulders.

"So reliable that I shall go there to avenge my brother's death," she answered. "If the Familiar can be said to have a nationality, he is a Croat. His mother was a Roumanian gypsy; his father the leader of the mongrel band of irregular horse which Austria maintained in the Majevica Plannina to guard the frontier from the attacks of the Servian brigands. He is still the feudal lord in that wild country over which the emperor wields but a nominal authority. There he can do what he pleases, and the authority which Franz Joseph gave to you would not be worth the parchment on which it is written. I have no wish to mystify you; I say that you were given such an authority simply from deduction; I had no report of what was said or done during your private audience; but parchment of one particular form and color is made exclusively for the emperor, and is used by him for only one purpose: the granting of liberties or privileges which require his personal signature and signet. There were ten blank sheets upon his desk when you entered; there were but nine when he left the room to escort the Archduchess Valerie to her carriage. Have I not reasoned fairly?"

"You have certainly been well informed," admitted Tommy guardedly. "If the Familiar is as well served, he probably knows just how many knots an hour this yacht is making and the exact time we shall reach Cattaro."

"Yes, he might have known all of that and more if in his madness he had not forgotten that a Magyar never forgives nor forgets," she answered. "He educated me too well for his own safety. It is one of his maxims that one should always be prepared with an alternative. He has voluntarily cut himself off from communication with his organization; but that will be only a matter of days—until he regains his sanity. Then his alternative will be ready to his hand; for John Orth will be in his power. John Orth and his daughter were spirited away from Strassburg and kept in seclusion in a castle near Nuremberg by the German secret police at the request of the Familiar. Two days since they were taken to Linz and placed on a yacht by his own agents. Their orders were to land at Neusatz at dusk, and in the night to convey them to the Familiar's castle in the Majevica Plannina. They will be safe from observation on the Danube, and in the Majevica, guarded by the Familiar's half-civilized retainers, John Orth will be a hostage to bargain with if it is necessary to make terms with Franz Joseph. In an hour he could be thrust across the Servian frontier—and Sarajevo has demonstrated the hatred of the Servians for Austrian archdukes. I believe that you will admit that I am justified in naming the Majevica Plannina as the Familiar's destination?"

Tommy ignored the inflection which had made her final statement an interrogation.

"A word from you would have deprived him of his hostage; the yacht would have been intercepted on the Danube," he suggested.

Mizzi's black eyes flashed defiance as she caught the note of suspicion in his voice.

"I warned you that you could let nothing interfere if you would succeed in your errand of mercy; may my tongue wither before it utters the word which might imperil my mission of vengeance!" she exclaimed passionately. "What is the safety of John Orth to you as compared with the peril of Ethel Carteret; what is the gratification of Franz Joseph's senile whim to me while the cowardly murder of my brother is unavenged? John Orth is the bait which will draw the wolf to our trap; may the Lord have mercy on Ethel Carteret if we are not there when she has once stood face to face with him; for then the Familiar will demand payment—and in the Majevica Plannina he can enforce his demand."

"Payment for what?" demanded Tommy, and Mizzi laughed derisively.

"For material for the biggest newspaper story of the century," she answered. "The Familiar will keep his promise to her—he never breaks his word when it is to his advantage to keep it. She left New York with him because he promised her the opportunity to meet John Orth and get that story from his own lips; she is still traveling with him voluntarily. He knows the value of patience; there will be nothing to alarm her during that journey; she would undoubtedly resent it if you interrupted it." She paused, and there was a smile on her lips as she looked from face to face of the group gathered about the table; but the smile vanished, and her face was very grave, as she tacitly dismissed the rest of us from her thoughts and fixed eyes which were suddenly sympathetic upon Tommy and Teddy Royan, who stood side by side.

"Yes, she would resent interruption now; but if there is such a thing as human gratitude, the man who stands between her and the payment which the Familiar will demand in the Majevica Plannina will deserve the greatest reward within her power to bestow."

Teddy's face flushed, and Tommy's grew perceptibly paler; but it was the Countess Czernac who broke the embarrassing silence with a question, in a dialect strange to my ears. Mizzi betrayed her surprise by an involuntary start; but, after a moment's hesitation, she nodded an affirmative answer, her eyes furtively watching its effect. The countess advanced eagerly, her hand extended palm upward; but, muttering a few unintelligible words, the girl pushed the extended hand impatiently aside and turned to join Tommy in the study of the map.

Prepared by the engineers of the Austrian general staff for war purposes, every road of importance was shown; but Mizzi's knowledge of the country was more enlightening than the map. Her pencil, moving rapidly over its surface, indicated the railroad route which the Familiar would undoubtedly follow as far as Sarajevo; a roundabout course skirting the Dinaric Alps. With equal confidence and surety, she traced a far more direct route by highroad, and by a rapid calculation of time figured that, barring accidents, the Familiar would have very few hours the advantage in reaching Sarajevo.

Tommy checked up her calculation before commenting.

"If it works out on the road as well as on paper, it looks good enough," he admitted doubtfully. "But you have allowed no margin for the delays which seem inevitable. With the movement of troops toward the frontier, it is prob-

able that all transport will be commandeered and the roads blocked. The colonel supplied me with a pass through all military lines; but——"

"Once beyond Cattaro, you may tear that up, and there will be no delays," interrupted Mizzi. "On the road we travel, the emperor's authority is laughed at, and there will be no lack of transport."

Tommy started to protest, but the countess laid her hand upon his arm.

"You still have much to learn of this curious empire of Austria, my friend," she said quietly. "From the Vistula to the Iron Gate of the Danube, and from Switzerland to the Carpathians, there is a kingdom which Franz Joseph does not rule. We may trust this girl to guide us to the Majevica with all possible speed, for no Tzigane rests while a blood debt remains unsatisfied."

Tommy's eyes suddenly narrowed as he folded the map and tossed it aside.

"I think that would be a useless burden; for it doesn't show the goat paths," he said. "I reckon we'll run closer to schedule than an Austrian railroad train, and there's a fair chance that we may head off our man before he can reach the Majevica."

"No, there is not the slightest chance of that!" exclaimed Mizzi. "We shall meet him on his own ground, for a man tastes the full bitterness of failure only when it comes at the moment when victory seems within his grasp."

Tommy and I stood leaning on the rail, watching the lights of the Istrian shore, which we were skirting at top speed, as we smoked our nightcap cigarettes.

"At one time and another, we've been up against some tough propositions, old chap," he volunteered, after a long silence. "We bucked the gamblers' ring in New York; we put the Indian sign on Van Osten and his gang. We took unheard-of liberties with the Black Hand, and broke up the quiet family circles of the Sicilian Mafia and the Neapolitan Camorra. I've never lost a minute's sleep for fear that any of that bunch might get back at us, but your Uncle Thomas will sleep with one eye open in a safe-deposit vault and keep his fingers crossed in daylight if he ever does anything to peeve a Hungarian gypsy."

CHAPTER XII.

From Cattaro, the quaint little Dalmatian capital, to Sarajevo, the little Bosnian town in which the pistol shots of a Servian youngster practically opened the greatest war of modern times, is in the neighborhood of a hundred miles as the crow flies; but the crow doesn't have to bother about mountain passes, brigands, suspicious provost guards, and a few other obstacles which we were forced to negotiate or dodge in our journey. We arrived in Cattaro to find that the great conflagration had started, and, with the official declaration of war, even the pretense of normal life was dropped. A civilian had no rights which the man in uniform was bound to respect, every possible means of transport had been commandeered for use of the army, and the town was already threatened by the French fleet from the sea and the Montenegrins from the surrounding mountains. Soldiers were quartered in every house, batteries of artillery were parked in the squares, and thousands of transport wagons rumbled through the narrow streets with ammunition and supplies for the army, which had already marched through for the Servian frontier.

Tommy's official pass was viséd without question at the military headquarters—in the early days of the great war there was little of the distrust and suspicion which grew so rapidly—but with that visé the headquarters staff lost interest in us. We were free to pass the military cordon drawn about the city,

but even the very generous amount of gold with which Royan had supplied us would have been inadequate to purchase horses or hire conveyances to carry us beyond the outposts.

But what gold could not do for us the black magic of Mizzi accomplished. The two ramshackle droshkies drawn by crowbaits so decrepit that the military authorities disdained to confiscate them, carried us to the outskirts of the town; the Countess Czernac, Mizzi, and Tommy in one; Teddy Royan, Sullivan, and myself in another. Our luggage was of the scantiest, for which, during the next hour, we were duly thankful; for, leaving the main road, under Mizzi's guidance, we followed a footpath so rough and steep that it would have taxed the endurance of a hardened mountaineer. That was the beginning of a journey which I shall not attempt to describe in detail; for that would be a story in itself. That first stage ended in perhaps two hours, when we skirted a precipice with a sheer drop of a thousand feet, on the narrowest of ledges, and, rounding a spur of bare granite, came most unexpectedly on a verdant and beautiful plateau, surrounded and sheltered by jagged and barren mountains.

In the middle of it was a large gypsy encampment, differing only in size from those which, in ordinary times, are so common beside the peaceful European highways. Our arrival was evidently expected, for a swarthy-faced, picturesque man advanced to meet us, and, after a half dozen words with Mizzi, led us to a corner of the camp where a decrepit old crone was working culinary miracles over a bed of glowing embers. A score of brown-faced children gathered about us, regarding us with a frank and fearless curiosity from black, beady eyes, and sniffing audibly the appetizing aroma from the great iron pot and the copper pannikins which surrounded it; but at a single sharp word from our host they quickly vanished, effacing themselves in the surrounding brush like a covey of quail threatened by a hawk. Then he turned to us, and in surprising English, which he had evidently acquired in Whitechapel, he gave us a simple, but hearty, welcome.

"Eat 'arty," he continued, as a handsome, laughing-eyed girl came from the tent with a pile of dishes, into which the old woman deftly ladled the results of her labors. "'A full belly makes a long road shorter,' as th' Romany folk say." Tommy looked at him curiously, inventorying his flamboyant costume of brilliant colors and the buttons, each a gold piece from a different nation.

"America, too?" he asked.

The gypsy's eyes twinkled shrewdly as he placed a finger on the ten-dollar gold piece which fastened the top of his scarlet waistcoat.

"This and a three-year-old without a blemish for a broken-winded skate as would kick the stars hout of the 'eavens when the dope wore off—from a rube at Zanesville, Ohio," he acknowledged.

Tommy turned quickly to Mizzi, doubt and suspicion in his eyes.

"You may rest easy in your mind," she exclaimed, before he could speak. "Janja may be trusted in anything but horses."

Tommy smiled as he shook his head.

"I was not doubtful of his fidelity," he said quickly. "But for the work in hand, a native——"

Mizzi interrupted him with a gesture. "Where is a gypsy native? In what land is he anything but a stranger and outcast? And through what country can he not travel unguided on the darkest night?" she demanded scornfully. "In years of house dwelling, I have lost much of that knowledge which I absorbed with my mother's milk; never until to-day have I set foot upon Dalmatian soil; but did I hesitate in choosing the path? Was I once at a loss

when it forked? Did you take a single unnecessary step in reaching this encampment? I could not explain it if I would; but the leaves, whispering in the breeze, give a message which only Romany ears can hear; the flight of every bird has a significance to us which your eyes cannot read. A bent twig at a crossroads means more to a Romany chal than a signboard, with its pointing arrows, to a Gorgio; a Romany child, separated from its family, could follow the pateran across a continent, over mountains, and through trackless deserts. You need have no uneasiness; not for gold—although he loves it, as all Romanies do—but because a woman of his people has a blood debt to collect, Janja will guide us in safety and with all speed."

Her faith was fully justified, for, no sooner was our meal finished, than hardy little mountain ponies were in readiness for us, shaggy, diminutive animals, as sure-footed as cats, and with their unshod hoofs almost as silent. With Janja leading, we left the encampment in single file, the ponies striking a little jog trot, which they maintained steadily, without the urging of whip or spur, uphill and down. There was nothing which could be dignified by the name of a road, and often hardly a path, but Janja never hesitated, in daylight or darkness, and, while we twisted and turned, and often made long detours to avoid the military patrols and the bands of predatory brigands which hung on the flanks of the advancing army, we kept always the same general direction. We rested for a few hours in the middle of the day, and always in the protection of a gypsy encampment, which Janja seemed to find by some subtle instinct, for the tents were invariably pitched in the most secluded spots. Just once Mizzi betrayed his method, pointing to three branches of twigs recently broken off and thrown, with apparent carelessness, beside the path.

"I cannot read it all, but that is the pateran of a Roumanian band," she said, as Janja turned his horse and ascended a hill on which my eyes could discern no path. She called to Janja, who turned easily in his saddle, although his pony was scrambling up a steep bank.

"They are of the Doftana clan," he answered. "Three tents and twenty horses. They come from the Drina, where the Montenegrins have attacked the Austrians, and the road ahead is blocked. We shall have to lay by until night." All of that, and the location of the camp, which we reached in another fifteen minutes, his sharp eyes read in the arrangement of those broken twigs, the manner in which the leaves were alternately stripped and left on the branches, the bruising of the bark. He had never seen this particular band, but they were living under three tents, twenty picketed horses grazed about them, and by word of mouth they confirmed exactly what he had read in that insignificant little pile of broken shrubbery, which I should have passed without a second glance. I came to recognie those paterans which warned us of danger or of the nearness of friendly nomads, although I could not read their meanings. Sometimes it would be a stone overturned, or one stone laid on another; again, a tuft of grass uprooted, perhaps a bunch of the mountain wild flowers discarded beside the path; but each one had an exact meaning, which Janja read with unerring accuracy. Transient and unstable they always were, as befitted the strange people who used them; for in those unsettled times the nomads rarely remained more than a day in one place; but they served their purpose, and, although we traveled light, we were never without food and shelter; and, warned of dangers ahead, we were able

to escape the questioning of the military patrols and molestation from the brigands, with whom the Romany were apparently more or less allied for mutual protection.

Diverse in their origin, the different bands which we met all used the common Romany dialect in speaking with each other, and only Janja and Mizzi recognized the trifling differences which distinguished the Bohemians from the nomads of the Bukowina, the Hungarians from the Roumanians, the Spanish from the Italians, and each from the other. The encampments were always much the same; strapping, swaggering men; bold-eyed, buxom girls; old hags as hideous as the Witch of Endor, and with the knowledge of all evil behind their furtive eyes; children as curious as magpies and as wary as partridges. And always dogs; great beasts, which watched our approach with suspicious eyes and bristling necks, but which never barked.

The animals seemed to have absorbed the qualities of their owners, and even our ponies entered into the spirit of our game of hide and seek. They trod softly when we sought shelter in thickets or ravines from approaching patrols; they stood immovable when the stamping of a hoof might have betrayed our presence; they gave no nicker when the scent of the chargers of the Alpine cavalry came to their delicate nostrils. Janja controlled them all with a word or gesture, and in return for their fidelity treated them with a care and an affection which a Derby favorite might have envied.

And on their strong little backs, under their master's expert guidance, we won through to the outskirts of Sarajevo on the exact schedule. More than once we had looked down on the great military road, to see transport wagons, ambulances, guns, and caissons struggling in a confusion which seemed inextricable; we encountered many detachments whose leaders had led their men astray in spite of maps and accurate directions; but even on the darkest nights —and it was in the dark that we were obliged to traverse the most difficult part of the country—Janja was never at a loss for the correct turning, and never once led us into an impasse.

Tommy never made the mistake of overestimating his own abilities, and, quickly realizing that Janja was a past master in his craft, he trusted implicitly to his guidance. For every one, except Mizzi, it was rough and unaccustomed travel, so that by the second day we men were a disreputable-looking quartet; but no one murmured nor complained. In fact, we spoke but little. Caution usually enjoined silence, and the narrow paths or trails which we followed usually necessitated riding in single file. When it was possible to ride two abreast, the pairing off was almost invariably the same: Tommy in the lead with Janja, in his quiet way acquiring from him a store of Romany lore, and picking up the dialect with marvelous facility; then Mizzi and Teddy, congenial partners through the universal freemasonry of youth. Sullivan, with the wonderful adaptability of a shrewd East Side youngster, had changed wonderfully during his close association with a gentler life than he had known before. He was still far from being a perfectly polished product; but, keeping his eyes and ears open, he had learned much, and, whenever possible, he was beside the Countess Czernac, unobtrusively offering a canine devotion which she did not in the least resent.

It was not until the towers and minarets of Sarajevo lay beneath us that there was anything like a consultation as to our next move, and that was extremely brief; for, without raising the slightest objection, Tommy assented to Mizzi's proposal that she should enter the town alone to search for informa-

tion which would decide it. The days and nights on the road, and the incidental association with her own people, had transformed her and made her a perfect agent for that purpose. She was no longer the waiting maid of Valerie's suite, schooled to an attitude of respectful humility by the rigid etiquette of royal service. Her skin was darkened by sun and wind, and in donning the costume of her people she had resumed the characteristic independent and confident bearing of the nomads. With her hair hanging in two thick braids, a row of gold coins across her low, broad forehead, heavy bracelets of gold, studded with matrix turquoises, on her brown arms, slender, bare feet, and slim, shapely ankles showing beneath her short scarlet skirt, it was difficult to recognize in her the demure little Hungarian girl who had served the archduchess with all humility.

She swung gracefully down the hill to the road which led to the town, leaving us encamped in a hollow where our little caravan was safe from observation. Janja, after caring solicitously for the ponies which had carried us so faithfully, climbed a precipitous cliff, from the top of which he had a wide view of the surrounding country, and, for the first time since that strange journey started, we were left without Romany companionship. The Countess Czernac, who had adapted herself to the hardship of our travel with unexpected ease and complacency, busied herself in repairing the ravages in her short-skirted hunting costume of gray loden cloth, Sullivan stretched on the turf beside her, watching her deft fingers with eyes eloquent of respectful admiration and humble devotion. Teddy, restless with the unexpended energy of a healthy young animal condemned to inaction, paced nervously about the glen; while Tommy, his face as calm and placid as if he hadn't a care in the world, smoked one cigarette after another as he lay flat on his back watching a seemingly endless flight of crows winging noisily toward the east.

"I am afraid that Miss Carteret will think me a fright," said the countess, as she stitched a rent which a thorn had torn in her skirt.

Tommy lazily turned his head to look at her.

"You seem confident that you will soon meet her. I wish that I were half so confident of that as I am of what her judgment of your appearance will be if we do," he said, smiling. "As you made no criticism, I took it for granted that you approved of what we were doing, although it seemed reckless madness to trust everything so implicitly to people we have been taught to distrust since our infant days, when our nurses hurried us into the house at the sight of a gypsy caravan approaching."

"Then it was a madness in which there was a very sane method—your only chance for success lay in trusting to them; and your wisdom in doing it, absolutely and without reservation, convinces me that we shall win," she answered. "Remember that I am a Bohemian; the Romany are no strangers to our people; thousands of them roam our country. I learned their language as a child, playing with their children in the forest about the castle. In Austria, they are everywhere with us, but not of us. As musicians and dancers, they are in the employ of our greatest nobles, and they are so intimately associated with our lives that no house holds a secret so carefully guarded that it is not known in the tents. Trust them blindly and implicitly, and they play fair; try to outwit them, and they will trick you to the utmost for the very sport of it. Deny them their modest toll of game from your forest, and they will strip your henroost bare. Do one of them a kindness, and it will be returned a hundredfold; injure the humblest of them, and his people will

exact payment, although you fly to the uttermost corner of the earth to escape them." She paused, and looked toward Teddy, whose restless pacing had carried him to the far edge of the glen. "And in our history it has been proven that the Gorgio who marries a Roman invariably goes to the tents, and bequeaths the curse of the wandering foot to future generations," she concluded, with a significance which was plainly meant for a warning.

Tommy smiled incredulously as he followed her eye.

"You seem to forget that Teddy wasn't whole of heart and fancy free when he started out on this expedition," he said dryly.

She shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"You still have much to learn; among other things, that many a heart is caught on the rebound," she exclaimed. "The girl we shall meet in the Majevica will not be the Ethel Carteret whom Teddy knew. You will understand her; she will understand you; for you have both lived; but that boy will not even speak her language. And Mizzi, her debt of hatred collected, will not be the Mizzi you have known, but the passionate and willful Tzigane who has more than once betrayed herself to my eyes as I have watched her talking with that handsome young giant as they rode together, or sat side by side at the camp fires of her people."

Tommy sat up, but he smiled incredulously as he shook his head.

"I'm not worrying about what will happen after she has collected, but I am tremendously interested to know how she intends to enforce payment," he said. "If what you have told me of Romany character is true—and I'm inclined to believe it after studying Janja, whom I assume to be a fair representative of his race—I can't for the life of me see how so shrewd a man as the Familiar dared stir up such a hornet's nest. Mizzi claims that he is half gypsy, so he must know them even better than you do, and yet he dared to double cross Sulki."

A furtive betrayal of fear came to her face as she looked uneasily at Janja perched immovable, high above us.

"But it was not the Familiar whom the world knows who did that!" she protested earnestly. "Nor was it the Familiar whom the world knows that met Sullivan in that darkened hallway. It was the ape which lives within him, the gorilla which I fear took possession of him years ago in the Forest of Semmering; the beast which lies so long dormant that when it is aroused it is unconscious of its own strength, and, in its frenzy for possession, destroys that which it desires, at the least resistance. It is just because the Familiar is half gypsy that his cunning permitted him to escape them; he was dealing with simple-minded gamekeepers and foresters. In New York he dared to take a chance which he would never have risked here, for——"

"Was Lolita Sevilliana a gypsy?" interrupted Tommy eagerly. "Count Amyar told us only the bare details in rehearsing the long list of Hapsburg tragedies—that she was a dancer of the Royal Opera——"

"Yes, she was a Gitana of the same Spanish clan as our guide," broke in the countess hurriedly, in a low voice, her eyes watching Janja. "I overheard him talking of her and her horrible death with Mizzi, and Janja will listen for the answer to the question which you promised to ask in the emperor's name. She was a wonderful dancer, brought from the Royal Opera in Madrid."

Tommy gave a low whistle of astonishment as he looked up at the man watching so patiently on the cliff.

"Then I made no mistake in permitting Mizzi to go alone!" he exclaimed. "If Janja has so strong a reason for

guiding us faithfully, and made no objection, she is to be trusted. I have been a little uneasy, but——"

"She is returning," interrupted the countess, and there was a triumphant smile on her lips as she pointed to Teddy, his face radiant as he hurried toward the entrance to the glen. Janja was already descending the sheer face of the cliff with reckless speed, and, a moment later, Mizzi, her black eyes glowing with excitement, stood before us. A nod and a single word in Romany to Janja caused him to hurry in rounding up the ponies, which were peacefully grazing, without waiting for details or explanations.

"We must start at once," she exclaimed. "I have seen your Ethel Carteret. Even the Familiar was delayed by the disorganization of the railroads; but now he is nearing his own territory, and he will travel fast."

"Confound it! I should have gone with you!" exclaimed Tommy ruefully. "You saw her, and yet you let her slip through your fingers!"

"Yes, I saw her, and I let her slip through my fingers," answered Mizzi defiantly. "You could have done nothing if you had been with me; you would have been thrown into prison at the outposts. I would have been in grave danger had I been suspected. She is not a prisoner; she is not even suspicious of danger. She is accompanying the Familiar willingly and eagerly. A gypsy girl can go anywhere and speak to any one without exciting suspicion. I spoke to her, and she gave me this for telling her the fortune at which she laughed."

In the palm of the little brown hand which she held out lay a bright five-dollar gold piece, and Tommy's eyes suddenly narrowed when, after a swift glance at Teddy's face, she flung it contemptuously as far as her strong young arm could send it.

CHAPTER XIII.

Again Janja became our leader, for it needed but a short consultation to decide that in the journey before us we would be hopelessly lost without his guidance. Towns we knew we must absolutely avoid, for we were so near the Servian frontier that troops were quartered in the most insignificant hamlets, and the least misfortune which threatened us was the confiscation of our mounts, which would have been seized on sight.

"Fighting there 'as been, and *bloody* fighting," he said, pointing to the east. "Carrion crows don't 'urry to where there's nothink to peck at. If we travels be'ind the lines we'll have trouble."

"What's the answer, Janja?" asked Tommy sharply.

"Travel betwixt 'em," answered the gypsy, grinning. "At the first go off, the Montenegrins must 'ave given the Austrians a proper 'iding; but they'll not stay on this side of the Drina. For the next week there will be a strip where the Austrians won't dare go, and which the Montenegrins won't try to hold until the Servians come up. We can travel best on this bank of the Drina. It's mortal hard for man and beast, but needs must when the devil drives."

"Or when the devil lures us on—a devil in human shape, a devil who lurked in the Forest of Semmering ——" Tommy paused abruptly, and the gypsy looked at him steadfastly.

"You know? You have proof?" he demanded.

"We know—and we go to get the proof, if you can guide us to where it may be found," answered Tommy quietly.

Janja nodded as he looked again at the sky.

"The crows gather for the feast when the fighting's done," he said. "We shall travel unmolested by the liv-

ing. They 'ave given us a valuable tip, and in the end we'll pay them with a dainty morsel, 'ave no fear."

There was no mistaking the man's sincerity, and within an hour we had the first proofs of the accuracy of the deductions he had made from the flight of the birds and the signs and portents which his keen eyes had read as he perched among them at the top of the cliff. Urging the ponies to a faster gait, we pressed on toward the Drina; but, once out of sight of Sarajevo, Janja deserted the devious mountain paths and struck boldly into the high-road. Such a compact, well-mounted and well-armed caravan as ours had little to fear; for, while the road was thronged with soldiers, there was no organization to oppose us, no authority to question.

It was the ruck of a retreating army which we first encountered—stragglers, deserters, camp followers, and hangers on who had fled at the first hostile shot. They were panic-stricken, for rumor of disaster followed faster than their hurrying feet could carry them. Soon there was sufficiently grim evidence that others had at least attempted to make a stand, for the long wagon trains which had carried supplies to the frontier were returning, filled to their utmost capacity with wounded. The Austrians, immensely superior in numbers, had attempted to cross the Drina and prevent the junction of the Servians and Montenegrins, but they were raw and inexperienced levies contending against the veterans seasoned in the fierce fighting of the Balkan War, and, as almost invariably happens, the first repulse had speedily bred a panic, leading to a retreat which at once became a rout. There was no semblance of organization or discipline; formations had been entirely lost, and we encountered only a panic-stricken mob—infantry soldiers, artillerymen, and dismounted cavalry troopers, inextricably mixed in their flight, and intent only on that and dodging the saber cuts of the few cursing officers who tried vainly to stay it and drive them back.

We were not molested; for the first things discarded by the fugitives had been their arms; and, riding knee to knee, we pushed steadily through them, Janja's heavy whip emphasizing his imperative calls for right of way through the human barrier; his wonderful knowledge of horses, and skill in handling them, enabling him to clear away obstacles when the clumsy teamsters had blocked the narrow passes or bridges with a tangle of guns, ammunition vans, transport wagons, and ambulances; and even later, when we entered the zone where a semblance of a defensive line had been established, we passed unchallenged, for Janja seemed to scent instinctively the neighborhood of commanding officers' headquarters, and, avoiding them, we encountered only the outposts where the inexperienced soldiers gave thought only to the possible approach of enemies from the east.

It was perhaps fortunate that we traveled through the territory which had been fought over in the night. The moonlight softened the details, but they were still sufficiently horrible. There were many windrows such as only one harvester reaps, marking the lines where infantry had met the deadly, withering fire of the expert Montenegrin riflemen; hillocks and mounds where exploding shells and scattering shrapnel had checked an advancing or intercepted a retreating regiment. The wastage of war was everywhere apparent; discarded arms and accouterments strewed the road, broken and overturned wagons blocked it; guns dismounted by rival artillery fire, or abandoned because the horses which had drawn them lay dead in the traces, were beside it.

Fortunately for our nerves, of wounded there was none. At the outset, the Austrians had sent theirs to the rear; at the end of the day the Montenegrins had swept victoriously across the field, returning leisurely to the river after the Austrian retreat. For centuries the Montenegrins have carried on a boundary warfare with the Albanian Turks, and they are not sentimentalists.

At daylight we saw them, and I confess that I was grateful that the turbulent Drina lay between us, and that experience had taught them not to waste ammunition. The army, every soldier heavily laden with his spoils of the previous day's victory, marched slowly along the Servian bank of the river. They were strapping mountaineers, brigandish in costume, with little of the appearance of soldiers, but, as we had seen, mighty effective fighters. Their transport was primitive; their women marching with the file closers, carrying huge burdens and falling back to put their broad shoulders to the wheels when the great guns, drawn by oxen, became stalled. Our own progress was much faster; but, while they paid little attention to us, I was relieved when our parallel roads diverged. Since daylight we had followed the Austrian bank, the ponies often carrying us along the side of the gorge, where I could barely discern a path, and saw only too plainly the vicious rapids, which seemed directly below, with only atmosphere between, causing me to realize the truth of Janja's description that travel on the bank of the Drina was mortal 'ard for man and beast. But at noon he turned his pony abruptly, spurring it up a hill which would have taxed the agility of a mountain goat. We followed, one by one, and I don't mind saying that when I arrived at the top my arms were firmly wrapped about the pony's neck.

It was a bare and desolate plain on which we emerged; the soil was too barren to repay cultivation. The herds which ordinarily grazed it had been driven back from the frontier, and there was not a living thing in sight; but Janja had never been more cautious than when we were gathered at the top of the gorge, and he quickly led us among sheltering rocks.

"There, between those 'ills, is the Majevica Plannina," he said quietly. "We 'ave not spared the 'orses, but now they must rest, for to-night they must carry us swiftly." He was already unsaddling, but Tommy protested.

"We men need no rest!" he exclaimed. "Those hills are not more than five miles away, and we can walk it!"

Janja shook his head. "Dead men don't walk," he answered curtly. "Try it in daylight, and we'd be spotted from the 'ills and 'unted like rabbits by the patrol. But a man can go where a caravan can't, and I'll try a bloomin' spy-out while you and the gee-gees rest."

"Not by a jugful, you won't!" exclaimed Tommy. "I can go where you can, and I'm going to get what information is going at firsthand!"

Janja hesitated, scowling at the first suspicion which he read in the protest.

"If you don't trust me, sir, we can part company——"

"Janja, if I didn't trust you I would shoot you without the slightest compunction!" interrupted Tommy sternly. "But there is one thing which we must both understand: The first and main purpose of this expedition is the rescue of Miss Ethel Carteret, not the punishment of the Familiar. Mizzi might have accomplished that in Sarajevo; had I been with her, Miss Carteret would never have left there to come to this horrible place, where the odds are all against us. I'm not taking any more chances. If there is to be a reconnoissance, I'm going to help make it."

Janja looked inquiringly at Mizzi before answering, and there was a quiet dignity in his bearing when he spoke.

"Mr. Williams, there is *much* we must both understand," he said grimly. "Three days ago the carrion crows whose flight darkened the midday sun yesterday were scattered over half of Hungary. Can you tell me 'ow the signal passed from province to province to bring them to their feast of carrion beside the Drina?"

"I am not a naturalist," answered Tommy irritably.

"No, and you are not a Romany, so you cannot guess 'ow the signal that started a 'undred and more caravans to the Majevica Plannina was carried." Janja indicated the distant hills with a sweep of his arm. "They are there," he continued. "Romany folk, who have gathered as the crows flocked to the Drina battlefield. They have come to give justice; to-night it will be finished; to-morrow there will not be a gypsy tan within a score of miles—nor one stone left standing on another of Majevica Castle."

"They will fight?" demanded Tommy anxiously. "This is not fair, Janja! In the storming of the castle there will be danger——"

"Yes; they will fight—as the Romany fight—with their wits," interrupted Janja. "Five 'undred 'orsemen ride at the Familiar's word, a 'undred guard the castle, but not a blow will be struck nor a shot fired. There will be no 'arm done, and Miss Carteret will be safe. To-night you will see what no Gorgio eyes 'as ever be'eld—a man tried for his life before the Romany court—and I shall see what I 'ave never before seen, nor my forbears before me—a Gorgio speaking the words that will bring him to his doom. You 'ave done well, sir; you 'ave still much to do; but until darkness comes you can do nothink better than sleep. The Familiar cannot reach the Majevica before sunset. If you go with me, you will run a useless risk."

Tommy hesitated, but in the end he gave a reluctant consent, for the countess pleaded with him to yield, and for the first time betrayed a nervousness and apprehension which made a strong appeal for masculine protection.

Janja vanished; for the barren plain absorbed him a moment after he left us, although to my less experienced eyes it did not seem to afford a hiding place for a rabbit. Teddy and Mizzi had wandered together to the far end of the gully, and Sullivan, lying concealed in the rocks, watched for the approach of possible enemies. Looking fearfully about, as if fearing spying eyes and listening ears, the countess laid a trembling hand on Tommy's arm.

"Mr. Williams, is it too late to break this unholy alliance?" she asked piteously. "I did not know—I never believed—I thought it was just one of the thousand romantic legends bred by the mysterious life of the Romany." She was almost incoherent in her nervousness.

"I am afraid you are overtired, countess," answered Tommy kindly. "You must not let your nerves get the better of you. Janja is melodramatic perhaps——"

"But you do not understand!" she exclaimed. "We have stepped back into the Dark Ages—into necromancy. From my childhood I have heard horrible tales of this Romany justice court—it is an orgy of witchcraft; to take part in it is to endanger your eternal salvation—to court madness on earth and damnation forever after!"

"I'm not worrying half so much about my eternal salvation as for the earthly safety of Ethel Carteret," answered Tommy, a grim smile on his lips. "If Janja plays fair, and helps me to assure that, I don't mind taking a hand in the gypsy hocus-pocus with the Familiar afterward. You take these

people too seriously; you have let them humbug you and——"

"Wait and tell me that to-morrow—if we are alive and sane," she interrupted. "I am not a child, to become terrified with tales of the bogy man, but Janja frightens me. Could anything I might tell you make you break with him—refuse to take a part in this horrible thing which he plans?"

"No!" answered Tommy decisively. "I know you do not doubt his fidelity; we have too much at stake to be overscrupulous as to methods in dealing with a brute like the Familiar. I am going through with it at any cost."

It lacked but a few minutes of sunset when Janja returned, slipping into our hiding place as mysteriously as he had left us, undetected in spite of the sharp watch which we kept.

"Everythink is right as rain," he said eagerly. "The archduke is in the castle; the Familiar will arrive with Miss Carteret in an hour. By his orders, the patrol has ridden north to guard the passes from the Danube. Everythink is arranged. We start at once."

"Janja, is there not another woman there—the archduke's daughter, Countess Larissa?" asked Tommy.

The gypsy smiled. "She 'ooked it; that's why the patrol 'as gone north," he answered. "She gave 'em the slip last night, and the Familiar fears that she will try to bring 'elp from the Danube. So long as he 'olds her father prisoner——"

"How long?" demanded Tommy, his voice betraying the strain he felt.

Janja pointed to the edge of the sun, just visible above the horizon. "There will be no prisoner in the Majevica Castle when she rises; there will be no Majevica Castle," he said grimly, as he turned to the horses.

The Familiar's ancestral home was not particularly imposing as we rode toward it in the moonlight. A thousand such relics of medieval architecture are scattered on the hilltops of Austria and Hungary—the ancient strongholds of the petty nobles who guarded the passes against the Moslem raiders, and for payment exacted a heavy toll from the peaceful travelers. Most of them have fallen to ruin; but Majevica had always held a garrison to protect the Plannina from the raids of the brigands who infest the region of the Drina. Against a determined attack, with modern weapons, it would have gone down like a house of cards; but it was sufficiently formidable to hold the raiders in check; and, perched on a hill, it commanded the only eastern entrance to the Plannina.

With Janja and Tommy in the lead, we galloped boldly into that pass, unchallenged, and apparently unobserved. A half dozen mysterious figures appeared to take our horses when we dismounted at the foot of the hill; and, without the slightest attempt at concealment, Janja climbed the moonlit road which led to the castle.

The reason for his careless indifference was plain when we entered the vaulted passage which led to the courtyard, for the two sentries slumbered peacefully at their posts, and the floor of the guardroom was littered with the bodies of soldiers whose heavy snoring suggested drugs. A swarthy-faced gypsy lad met us, and, for the first time enjoining caution, Janja followed him with stealthy, noiseless feet. Through a narrow doorway, up a primitive stone stairway, we silently groped our way until we came out upon a bastion lying in the deep shadow cast by the donjon tower; and, standing there in the darkness, we looked through an open window into a brightly lighted room where John Orth, the Familiar, and Ethel Carteret sat together at table.

CHAPTER XIV.

A casual observer would have suspected nothing unusual nor threatening

in that room. They sat about a table on which the remnants of their supper still remained, apparently in all friendliness. The Familiar was a silent listener, but not a gesture of his companions passed unnoticed by his strange, kinetoscopic eyes. The girl was all animation, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling with excitement as she leaned forward, plying John Orth with eager questions. She was the newspaper woman, triumphant in having run a great story down; with a sensation which would excite a world-wide interest ready to her pencil point.

John Orth was unshaven, and his clothes were in slovenly disorder. He had pushed aside a well-filled plate apparently without tasting the food; but, just as apparently, he had not neglected the drink, for a couple of empty wine bottles were at his elbow; and, as we watched him, he tossed off a brimming glass of the fiery Hungarian brandy, promptly refilling the empty glass, and almost roughly brushing aside the hand which the girl extended to remove the bottle from his reach. His tongue was so thick that his speech was unintelligible; but he gulped down the second glass; and then, as he reached out unsteadily to grasp the bottle again, his body suddenly became limp, his head fell forward, and, lurching from his chair, he fell to the floor and rolled beneath the table.

With an exclamation of disgust, Ethel Carteret turned to the Familiar; but something which she read in his face caused her to shrink back from the table and glance apprehensively about the room. For a moment he watched her in silence, and then, with that familiar little flick of the finger, he unsealed his lips.

"You have had your heart's desire, my dear," he said. "I have kept my promise literally; you have been brought face to face with Gheradi, John Orth, the Archduke Johan Salvator—call the swinish brute what you please. You have heard the romantic story of his life from his own lips; you have the material to write your sensational romance—and now?"

"And now?" she repeated. "Why, now I shall give you my heartfelt thanks, and ask you to arrange that I may return as speedily as possible," she answered. "Some day I may be able to repay your kindness; one can never tell what——"

"No, one can never tell what may happen in the future, so we shall not trust it, my dear!" he exclaimed. "You can repay me now. I can exact payment, if you refuse to give it. This poor castle is mine, my dear; it has been left too long masterless; now it shall have both a master and a mistress, and I, too, shall have my heart's desire." He rose from his chair and leaned toward her across the littered table. She, too, sprang to her feet, moving to one side to bring its full width between them. His words had been convincingly clear and frank; but had they left the slightest doubt in her mind of the peril which confronted her, the horrible, triumphant leer which distorted his grotesque face would have dispelled it.

Strangely enough, it was not fear, but a sickening disgust, an unutterable loathing, which the sudden change aroused in the girl. Defiantly she faced the hideous satyr, and there was not a suggestion of tremor in her voice when she answered him.

"You loathsome brute! You filthy, despicable beast!" she exclaimed contemptuously, the eloquent disgust in her tone, the repulsion in her eyes more insulting than her epithets. Words and manner cut like a whiplash, and for an instant the Familiar winced; but their sting worked another and no less horrible transformation, a change which realized our gravest fears.

The change was a matter of seconds,

but they seemed hours. The final result was a monster, a quintessence of all that is repulsive and horrible in the simian tribe. The table which separated him from the object of his rage was massive, of heavy oak, black with age. It would have taxed the strength of two ordinary men to move it, and for the moment the girl seemed to think it a sufficient barricade, and she poised herself for such flight as would keep it constantly between them.

The Familiar—or what the Familiar had become—glared across it with eyes glowing red, fixed upon her beautiful white throat. His snarling lips were distorted in a horrible grin as her hand moved furtively toward a knife; but when its handle was almost within her grasp, he sent knife, dishes, bottles, and the débris of their meal flying across the room with one sweep of an inordinately long arm. She shrank back with a cry of fear as his finger tips brushed her hand in passing; but that cry was as nothing compared with the one which came from her lips when, with an exhibition of strength which was miraculous, he seized the table itself, and, swinging it above his head, sent it crashing against the bare stone wall a dozen feet away. Her last defense snatched away, she stood facing him in helpless, frozen fear; only the senseless body of John Orth between her and this thing which crouched down as if preparing to spring at her.

That we had remained inactive spectators at first was due to the whispered cautions of Janja, who warned us that the slightest interference upon our part would upset carefully laid plans and lead to disaster. Then, as that horrible drama unfolded before us, we, too, seemed frozen with fear and helpless with horror. Once my hand had automatically closed upon the butt of my revolver; but as I drew it from the holster, my wrist was caught in a grip of steel, and Janja hissed a word of caution fiercely in my ear. The pistol was taken from my hand, and, a moment later, its muzzle rested against Tommy's temple; and his muscles, which had been tightening for a spring, relaxed. How far the gypsy had planned to let things go I never knew; but from his curse at interference, I suspect that the safety of the American girl weighed lightly in his calculations.

It was a cry of horror from the Countess Czernac which precipitated things; a cry which echoed in all of our hearts and aroused a berserk rage in Sullivan. It caused him to disregard the shouted protests of Janja and shake off the pinioning arms of Mizzi, who had thrown herself upon him as he sprang to his feet. I believe that the Familiar was oblivious to the commotion; I doubt if he even saw Sullivan when he jumped through the window into the room. I am sure that he did not see the rest of us as we followed, as by that time he was unconscious.

With the lightness of a cat, Sullivan had landed on his feet beside him, just as the brute launched his spring. The young pugilist's punch is sufficiently famous, but no opponent in the squared circle had ever caught such a blow as landed on the Familiar's jugular. The hatred nursed since their last encounter was back of it; the horrified cry of the countess gave it added force. It caught its victim in mid-air, the very impetus of that tremendous spring making its effect more deadly, whirling him about until his feet were uppermost, and sending him crashing headlong amid the wreckage of the table. Sullivan was after him like a terrier after a rat, and I saw Ethel Carteret go suddenly limp and collapse on the floor; the last thing, save a myriad of stars, which I saw distinctly for a long time; for a perfect avalanche of gypsies burst into the room through doors and windows, and a minute later I was at the bottom of a struggling Romany mass, their un-

couth cries deafening my ears, the stench of their unclean clothes and sweaty bodies in my nostrils, and a sinewy hand at my throat choking me into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XV.

Even Sullivan did not escape unscathed from that mêlée which his impulsive act had premeditated; for in the confusion it took Janja no little time to gain control of his followers. He had been overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers, as had been Tommy and Teddy Royan, and we were a battered quartet before Janja could make the gypsies understand that we were friends. Once order was restored, they moved with a silence and celerity which suggested a discipline unexpected in the lawless nomads. At his nod, a couple of them picked up the unconscious figure of the girl we had come to save, and with all gentleness carried her from the room, the countess walking beside them.

Another pair raised John Orth unceremoniously by head and heels, and carried him out; and Janja himself knelt beside the Familiar, whose heels were beating a devil's tattoo on the stone floor as his legs twitched convulsively. His examination finished, the gypsy glared savagely at Sullivan.

"You might 'ave croaked 'im, and you can bless your lucky stars it's only a knock-out!" he exclaimed; and it was not difficult to guess what would have happened to Sullivan in that wild crew if he had robbed him of his prey. "We 'ave no time to waste. Can you 'elp me bring him around?"

Sullivan grinned, and nodded assent. So far as their personal account stood, that one clean punch had settled all scores; and, pushing Janja aside, he started, with practiced hands, to bring him back to consciousness. Tommy and I did what we could to help him, and I, for one, felt immensely relieved when I saw that it was the Familiar in his proper person who was struggling back to life.

Tommy's face was the first one he saw when he partially revived, and in a bewildered, confused way he mumbled his name. He tried to rise, but Janja and his swarthy followers pounced upon him, and, grasping his struggling arms and legs, swung him aloft and carried him, a helpless captive, from the rude banqueting hall of his forefathers. At a sign from Janja, we followed, through the courtyard, beneath the vaulted entrance, and down the steep hill.

In a little glade of the adjoining forest they halted, and dropped their burden on the turf. Not another human being was visible; but at a peculiar, birdlike whistle from Janja's lips, the whole place seemed alive with all the gypsies of Europe. From all directions they swarmed silently between the trees, ringing the border of the glade in a solid circle. With the exception of Mizzi and a hideously ugly old hag, they were all men, and, despite their outlandish costumes, they bore themselves with a quiet dignity which made the weird gathering strangely impressive. Mizzi joined us as Janja walked slowly to the center of the circle and motioned to the Familiar's captors to raise him to his feet. Her face was tragic, and, avoiding Teddy, who had advanced eagerly to meet her, she slipped between Tommy and me, grasping an arm of each of us to keep us at her sides.

"Miss Carteret is safe," she said hurriedly. "The countess is caring for her. There is nothing more for you to do; it is better that you go, and go quickly. Slip away quietly when Janja commences to speak. I will guide you to them, and you can ride for the Danube. In an hour you will be in safety, for Count Amyar Festonyi and his hussars are coming, and you will meet them. This is no place for any but a Romany."

"Would you come with us, Mizzi?" asked Tommy quickly.

She glanced toward Teddy, and I felt her hand tremble on my arm.

"I will join you later. I can follow your pateran," she answered, with a pitiful attempt at a smile. "I am a Tzigane of Hungary. I must——"

"Then we shall stay, Mizzi," answered Tommy quietly. "It will be better in the end—better that Teddy should see now, than learn later, just what life under the tan means."

"Yes, it is better that he should know now, Mizzi," I said; and, dropping her hands to her sides, she accepted that judgment without question, and, walking forward, stood beside Janja, who was speaking, in a low voice, but so clearly that every word carried to the farthest listener. He faced the Familiar, who stood between two strapping, muscular gypsies, who half supported him. But while his legs were still wabbly from the effect of Sullivan's punch, his scheming brain had evidently regained full activity, and he listened with a contemptuous defiance to the speech, which must have been a denunciation.

Janja spoke for perhaps five minutes, and then motioned to Mizzi to continue. In a voice hardly audible, she said a few words, of which I could distinguish only "Sulki" and "New York"; but her speech brought apprehension to the Familiar's eyes, an apprehension which grew as Tommy, in response to Janja's signal, stepped forward.

"You will tell us 'ow Sulki died," said Janja sternly. "I'll put it into Romany as you go along. It will be easy for the chals to understand; we knows somew'at of dope, as you saw to-night in the guardroom."

"And as we saw at the Familar's table; for John Orth must have been drugged as Sulki was," said Tommy quietly; and then, stepping forward, he took the center of the weirdest stage on which he had ever appeared. He spoke slowly and easily, giving a vivid account of what we had seen of Sulki's condition in New York, the opinion of the hospital doctor, and the contents of Royan's cable announcing the fatal result. Janja translated as he spoke, and, when he finished, and turned to rejoin us, laid a restraining hand upon his shoulder.

"So much for Sulki, sir; but there is something more!" he exclaimed. "You had a question to ask."

"I'd rather not," Tommy answered. "That is not my affair."

"Ask it! Ask it!" jeered the Familiar tauntingly. "Fine company you are keeping, my clever friend; but there is law in Austria. I expect these vagabonds will kill me; but Franz Joseph has a long arm, and you will all feel the weight of his hand for this night's work."

Tommy looked at him pityingly.

"Very well. I shall ask it, for that was the promise I made to Franz Joseph," he said. "It is very simple, and I already know the answer; but I promised him that I would ask you what manner of death Lolita Sevilliana died in the Forest of Semmering?"

That answer was never given in words; they were unnecessary; for the sudden lividity of the Familiar's face was confession. A murmur of anger came from the circle of gypsies, which narrowed threateningly; but Janja checked the advance with a gesture.

"It is for me to say. Lolita was of my clan. Her mother stands before you!" exclaimed Janja, pointing to the old crone, who suddenly appeared beside him. He dropped back into the Romany, which was unintelligible to us, but his passionate appeal produced a wonderful effect upon the Familiar, who broke from his captors and threw himself at Tommy's feet.

"Save me, save me! For the love of Heaven!" he screamed. "Death I do not fear, but these devils say that I am

an ape; that I sinned as an ape, and that an ape I shall be forever! I know them; my mother was of their accursed blood; they laid a curse upon her when she left them for my father! Now they will work their devilish spells! I know —I know!"

It was horrible; so horrible that, despite our loathing for the man, I believe that we should have answered his appeal had it been possible; but we were powerless, for the weapons which had been deftly removed from our pockets suddenly appeared in the hands of neighboring gypsies, and Janja sternly bade us to stand still, on penalty of death. Even so, I believe that we should have risked it had we realized what was to happen in the end; but when we knew, it was too late.

It took four men to hold the Familiar when they threw him on the ground, and a fifth pried his mouth open with a dagger. Then the old hag bent over him, and, chanting a weird incantation, poured the contents of a small bottle between the parted, blood-flecked lips. It must have been tremendously powerful, for even in the open air, and at a distance of perhaps twenty feet, we caught the strange, pungent odor which it gave off, and its effect upon the Familiar was immediate; his struggles ceased, and he lay still when the men who had held him rose to their feet. For a moment Janja stood gazing down on the face which was weirdly grotesque in the moonlight, and then, assisted by the old hag, he stripped the prostrate figure to the waist.

When he rose to his feet, he held one end of a light steel chain which was attached to a leather collar locked about the Familiar's neck, and, jerking it roughly, he roused the prostrate figure from its lethargy. And then, for the first time, we realized the full horror of the punishment which the Romany had inflicted; for in every uncouth movement this thing which the Familiar had become was an ape. There was nothing of human intelligence in the eyes which had been so wonderful; no word intelligible to human ears in the chattering from those lips which had been so remarkably polyglot. The infernal brew of that repulsive old hag had destroyed the intellectual faculties of one of the most remarkable brains ever placed in a human skull; the suave, polished diplomat, the contriver of royal alliances, the negotiator of treaties, was no longer a man, but a gibbering idiot, dancing grotesquely and uncouthly in the moonlight for fear of Janja's whiplash, and to the accompaniment of the jeering laughter of a pack of Romany vagabonds.

Mizzi was the only one of her race to turn away, and with downcast eyes she hurried toward us. Not a word was spoken, but when she looked up and read in Teddy Royan's eyes the loathing and horror of all things Romany which possessed all of us, she turned again and fled into the sheltering shadows of the forest.

Suddenly the silvery light of the moon was dimmed by a passing cloud; but no merciful darkness came, for the red flare of fire burst from every loophole of Majevica Castle above us. Startled, we turned to it, and almost instantly the assemblage dispersed, the gypsies disappearing as silently and mysteriously as they had come. They seemed to have forgotten our presence; but it will be many a long day before I can forget my last sight of them: The Familiar shambling into the shadows, his finger tips touching the ground in his uncouth leaps as he gibbered unintelligible protests against the flicks of Janja's whip which stimulated them.

THE END.

It Looked Easy

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "Confidence," "The Boob," Etc.

There's more than one way to win a fight. Here's Battling Hughey Doyle, who stakes his reputation on hypnotism. Perhaps it's the first time the hypnotic stunt has been tried in the ring; but the Battler proves his point beyond a peradventure

I SEE you got a book there about this hypnotism stuff—wave your hands in a guy's face, look at him like he's some new kind of fish or somethin', then make him holler like a cow or take off a crowin' rooster. That's the usual layout, anyhow. But let me slip you this, bo: the fellow that shot that book at you ain't no friend of yours; he'll probably be knockin' you to the boss or somethin' like that the next time he starts.

What do I know about it? Say! What does the kaiser know about air rifles? There's a whole lot of things you probably know that I couldn't even *spell,* but this here hypnotism thing is my dish! That's one game I do know a little somethin' about, and my advice is lay off it; it's the bunk!

In the first place, these here guys that hypnotizes for a livin' in theaters and places like that has everything all framed up, includin' the audience. They always plant a lot of fellows out in front, and when they call for volunteers the hired help is on the job. If *you* try to go up on the stage, they steer you off to Exit Z and tell you to take the air. Well, the hypnotizer gets his gang up on the stage, and the guy that crows like a rooster, crows; another guy rolls peanuts around with his nose; the professor jabs a phony pin in a couple of others, and the rest of them goes through their regular act. And these boobs out in front, laughin' themselves sick, think it's on the level and the professor is a wonder!

Hey! If he could sure enough hypnotize, what would he be workin' *there* for? Couldn't he just walk up to some bank, wiggle his hands in the cashier's face a couple of times, and say: "Slip me about half a million—I'll be back in the mornin' for the rest!"

Sure he could! And would he do it? Would *you?* Well, there's my argument.

But, gettin' around to how I got the low-down on this thing: I had a boy in my stable about five years ago called Battlin' Hughey Doyle. He was a heavyweight from his neck down, and from there up he didn't weigh nothin' at all. Hughey was one of them birds that call you "Yes, sir!" if you got a shine and a clean collar on, and takes a crack at your bringin'-up if you ain't. Got me? A born bell hop or a small-town hotel clerk, maybe, but that kind of a bird. Hughey's idea of life was eat, sleep, and wallop, and he was a big leaguer at every one of them things. At anything else—and I don't care what it was—he could give himself a half-mile start and lose out. That was Hughey.

But I wasn't runnin' no dancin' academy, and them things don't bother me a bit. Hughey could step around fast enough to keep his face off the

other guy's glove most of the time, and he had a wallop concealed in his right arm that turned up a yellow streak in many a game man. That's all I ask a fighter to have; at least, if he brings that much in with him, you can give him the other things in a very short time.

I was pointin' Larry at the title, and he was knockin' 'em all dead when we meet up with this hypnotism thing. After that—well, he couldn't get in a fight if he'd been in Belgium!

I'll begin at the start, and when I get through I'll lay you eight to five right now you'll take that hypnotism book and ease it out the window.

After Hughey had bounced a lot of One-round Flannigans and Knock-out Smiths in the sticks, I brought him on to the big town for the real money. Of course the first thing I do is take him around to the newspaper offices and beg for a send-off. And, say! These guys that write the fight dope for the Constant Readers and Steady Subscribers are a riot and they don't know it. They figure that anybody that comes East, South, North, or West to New York is either the tenth wonder of the world or else he don't belong at all. See? No halfway stuff—you're either a world beater or a bum. They're all experts, and no two picks the same winner. Why, you can get away with stuff along this Broadway place that they'd send you to the chair for in Pig's Crossing, Louisiana, or Rhubarb, Missouri.

Hughey's line of talk began at "Search" and ended at "me"—that let him out. He never heard of conversation, and I don't believe he ever said more than ten words in his life before he hit Times Square, because he only knew about eight. Well, we eases in and out the newspaper offices, and when the fight writers asks Hughey to pull his spiel he says his two regular words and calls it a day. I told 'em all about him, got off some new jokes, and passed out cigars, but it was no use—they sized up Hughey, made me spell out the name of the town we come from, and reached for the pencil and paper.

I got all the papers that night and read 'em through. When I got done, I realized Hughey would have to do a piece of fightin' if he wanted to get his name in the "Notes of the Leather Pushers."

Why? Oh, one guy writes that Hughey had run a dead heat for the title with the champion bonehead of the world, another one said he looked like an A-1 piano mover and did anybody need him, and a couple of others had drawed pictures of him sayin' a lot of funny stuff, which, if he'd really pulled, I would have taken him in vaudeville.

Now there's a heavy fighter around New York called Jim Sweeney. He's workin' about three nights a week and knockin' 'em out so fast that the papers is full of him. He's got to be so big a card that every time he starts they have to call out the reserves to handle the crowd. I looked over the list of boys this fellow had flattened; and every one of them, as far as I can see, was a set-up. All poor old tramps that a one-armed blind man could have handled with ease. But that don't make no difference to a fight fan—not a bit! Sweeney is givin' 'em what they want. They know every time he starts that somethin's goin' to fall, so they pass up their five and ten bucks and kid themselves into thinkin' that he's the greatest fighter that ever pulled on a glove. That Irish name of his was nothin' against him, either.

You know there's a lot of these guys will tell you how strong they are for scientific boxers—the hit-and-run guys. They rave over 'em outside the club; but, sittin' around the ring, when these same birds are workin', they're as quiet as the inside of a church. They say

they like it, just like some guys will claim they're crazy for mushrooms; they figure it tips them off as a roughneck if they don't like stuff like that, see? But the boy that goes in there and lets 'em fall—the big, bull-necked mauler that don't know a right cross from an uppercut, but can tip 'em over for your life—that's the white-haired boy that gets the crowd jumpin' on the chairs and yellin' their heads off.

Why? Because the bunch that makes box fightin' a payin' game wants to see assault and battery at least when they sneak away from the wife and dig into the rent money for a ringside seat. This fancy stuff is great, but down in their hearts they want the bruiser, the guy that sticks his head down and sails in, hopin' he'll connect before the other guy does, the rough workers, the claret spillers—them's the boys that gets the crowd, the real money, and the newspaper raves!

Sportin' blood, I think they call it.

Although it was about as easy as stoppin' the war would be, I finally gets Sweeney signed up for a ten-round, no-decision bout with Doyle. After I had chased him around for a month like I'm gettin' divorce evidence, I get him out to the trainin' camp to look over Doyle workin' out. I had ribbed the handlers up in advance, and spent a day rehearsin' Hughey. When Sweeney and his gang comes out to the camp, the sparrin' partners beat Hughey all over the place while he stands there swingin' like a gate and missin' everything he tries. Doyle just looked boob enough to give the idea that he *was* tryin' but couldn't do no better, otherwise we'd never have got away with it. But it goes big with friend Sweeney; he has to go outside to keep from laughin' in Hughey's face.

The next mornin' we signed the articles.

We get the Garden for the big muss, and Sweeney is to grab twenty per cent of the gate. If there's any left after that, Doyle is to get five. That was about the only way a great unknown could get a fight in the big town them days; the dough had to be cut eighty-seven ways. It worked somethin' like this: The big local card gets his first, then the club, the referee, the lieutenant of the precinct, the ward leader, and a couple of other guys gets their bit. If they have any small change around after that, they slip the other fighter bean money. It was tough goin', but if you got across right away they took you in and you helped give the work to the next guy. See?

The fight is fixed for the followin' month, and as Sweeney has got a piece of trainin' to do himself to make it look good, he didn't get no more chances to come up and see Doyle work. So I turned Hughey loose, and in a couple of days I got to send out of town for more sparrin' partners—the regular guys had enough. You see, Hughey was so sore because I made him act like a boob the day Sweeney comes to the camp that as soon as he found he could quit the stupid stuff he let himself out and beat these hams all over the lot.

Naturally this gets circulated around a few, but it worked just the way I figured it would. Sweeney's manager, bein' a regular big-town wise guy, couldn't believe Doyle was any good because he come from somewhere else and he thought the stuff bein' sent out from my camp was the bunk. In fact, I met him downtown about that time one day, and I says to him, seriouslike:

"I hope there's nothin' wrong with this boy of yours, because Doyle will probably kill him if there is. I can't get nobody to box with him out at the camp any more, and——"

But he slaps me on the back and laughs out loud.

"Stop it!" he says. "I was handlin' fighters' when you were still shinin'

shoes in Horse's Neck or wherever you blew in from; so save that stuff for the boys back home. You can feed all of that to the newspapers, though, because that's the stuff that makes quarter-page ads a useless expense and makes 'em get down to the club at six bells and stand in line two hours waitin' for us to take their money."

He takes out a cigar and winks at me.

"They fall for anything here," he says. "Got me?"

"Yes," I tells him, "I make you all right—I seen that as soon as I got off the train. And if this here so-called fighter of yours don't fall for Doyle it'll be because you're in there holdin' him up."

With that, I left him flat on the corner.

A couple of weeks' before the fight, Doyle is ready to mix with anything from Sweeney to a peeved wild cat; and the only thing botherin' him was whether this other guy would catch a bad cold in the feet before the fight. I made him ease up a little on his trainin' because I didn't want him readied too fine; and one afternoon I hits on the idea of takin' him to the theater—I wanted to give him somethin' else to think about besides Sweeney for a few hours, anyhow.

I give him somethin', all right—and I wish somebody had hit me on the dome about six seconds before I got the flash about this theater thing. I guess I ain't seen six shows since then, because every time I see a theater I think of hypnotism, and every time I think of hypnotism I think of Doyle—and when I think of Doyle I want to take a dive off the City Hall roof.

That boy would have been champion of the world if it hadn't been for me.

I takes Hughey to a vaudeville show—I was always strong for this vaudeville thing because I like that song-and-dance and jugglin' stuff.

They had a guy on this bill called "Williams the Great," and he was one of these here hypnotizers. I don't know where he is now, but I know where he would be if they let me buy his ticket! However, he's on about the middle of the show, and gets a big hand when he comes out—I guess his lodge was out there in front, because why should they make a fuss over him before he's shown anything, eh? He's a tall, mysterious-lookin' bird, and before he gets workin' he pulls a lot of bunk about what the human mind can do and a guy called Will Power, who was probably the bird that invented hypnotism; at least that's the way I figured it after listenin' to his chatter. Well, after he gets that off his chest, he walks down to the footlights and makes the usual call for volunteers so's he can try out his stuff.

At first nobody makes a break; then he gets kind of pleadin' and give the signal, I guess, because a lot of hicks get up from all over the orchestra and goes on the stage. There was about a dozen of them, which shows that these hypnotizers must get the money, or how could they meet the old pay roll every week, eh?

Well, friend Williams picks out a few of his hired men and gets busy. He waves his hands in their faces, and in a couple of minutes one guy is tryin' to climb a tree which ain't there and another one is on his hands and knees pretendin' he's a cat. Of course the mob out in front is laughin' itself sick and yellin' for more. I got to give it to this guy; he was clever, at that—he had them guys do some of the nuttiest things I ever seen. He tells a big fat hick to stand on his ear, and out in front they're in hysterics, as they say, watchin' this guy do funny falls and stuff like that.

All of a sudden, I thinks to myself Hughey is terrible quiet for a guy

watchin' a thing like this, and I turns around to see how he's takin' it.

Say! He gimme a scare for your life! He's sittin' away out on the edge of his seat, with a grip on the chair in front of him that must have bit through the wood! There ain't a smile on him, and everybody around him is fallin' out of their seats with laughin'. There's a look on his face like he shot the works on the bay mare and she's second at the head of the stretch.

"Hey!" I says, shakin' him by the arm. "Don't take it so to heart! What's the matter—don't you make this guy's stuff, or what? I think he's a riot, and you sit there like you're takin' a long count."

The minute I spoke to him, he jumps about three feet. On the level!

"Let's beat it out of here!" he says, kind of excited.

He don't wait for my vote, but starts out the aisle, so there's nothin' for me to do but fall in behind. Out on the pavement, he grabs me by the shoulders.

"Did you see how that guy made them fellows act?" he says in my ear, like it's a secret.

"Of course I seen it," I says, kinda sore—they took me for three dollars for them seats. "Of course I seen it," I goes on. "And I'd be seein' some more right now if it wasn't for you! What's the idea in takin' the street just when this fellow's gettin' good?"

"Because," he says, grinnin' at me, "because I got somethin' to tell you. I'm goin' to be heavyweight champion inside of two months! I'm goin' to stop this Sweeney in less than a round. I'm goin' to flatten all these guys fightin' around here—takin' 'em on one a night while they last. I could take *two* on at once, as far as that goes, only I——"

But I shuts him off—I got my breath back then.

"When you come to my stable," I says, frownin' at him, "I told you I wouldn't stand for no ale hounds, and I see you been givin' the brew a play while I wasn't lookin'. I thought——"

He butts right in on me.

"Do you mean to say you don't get me?" he says, like it's a wonder I can live and be so stupid.

"I pass!" I says, givin' him a long look.

"Well, I'll wise you up, then," he comes back. "I used to think you was a clever guy, but you must be pretty thick at that if you have to be told what time it is before you know it's night. Here's the layout: Suppose I could climb in the ring with another guy, without no trainin' or nothin', walk up to him while he's feelin' me out, and, instead of takin' a chance and a wallop at him, just wave my hands in his face like this guy did at the theater and say: 'You're out, you bum—lay down and take the count!' Wouldn't that be great stuff, hey? I could let a couple of them stay a few rounds to make it look good and get away with it every night. Where would this champion get off if I got him in the ring and let him have that hypnotism thing, eh?"

Honest, I could hardly believe it. Here was this guy, talkin' more in five minutes than he'd ever said in his life before!

"I'm no good at riddles," I says, "but I want to tell you this: If you got the idea that you can get in a ring and stop anybody by wavin' your hands *at* them instead of *on* them, you're nuttier than a squirrel. Why, this——"

"*This* guy did it, didn't he?" shoots out Hughey, jerkin' his thumb at the theater.

"Do you mean to stand there and tell me you thought he was on the level with that stuff?" I says.

"Sure, sure!" he answers. "I seen him, didn't I?"

"Why, you poor boob!" I laughs at him. "Somebody will sell you the

courthouse if I let you get away from me here! I'll bet you think horse-racin' is a square game and Bryan was jobbed out of bein' president. Listen to me," I goes on, takin' hold of his arm. "Listen to me and be glad you got a guy lookin' after you that's been around a few places. This here Williams the Great can't no more hypnotize anybody than I can. Do you get that? Every one of them hicks that come up on the stage and did the funny stuff is on his pay roll, and he's got 'em all framed up to do them stunts. They all meet at the theater in the mornin' when nobody's around, and he shows them new ones. Now listen——"

"Lay off that stuff!" breaks in Hughey. "Don't try to knock that guy with me! How about the bird he stuck the pins in—had him framed up not to *bleed,* eh?"

I'd overlooked a bet there, but I comes back with this:

"Well," I says, "I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll lay you eight to five you can't hypnotize me right now."

"I probably can't, right off the reel," he says, like he might be able to in a few minutes; "but it won't take me long to pick it up. I'm goin' to watch this guy work every day until the fight comes off. I'll get all his stuff, see? I'll bet in a week I'll be able to at least make some of you wise guys holler like a dog or make a noise like a fish when I wave my hands and give you the eye. By the night of the fight—well, watch me, that's all!"

Say! It would have been funny if he hadn't been serious about it. These fighters are hot sketches. Once they fall for anything, it don't make no difference whether it's a girl or a red shirt; that's all they think of day and night until they nail it. When you get 'em where they think bein' yellow is worse than smallpox, you make champs out of 'em.

To say that I tried to steer Doyle away from this hypnotism stuff would be like sayin' Rockefeller was well off—it ain't tellin' half of it. If I'd made some speeches for prohibition, for instance, and put in the same amount of work lettin' 'em go—well, you wouldn't be able to buy enough of the brew in this town to-day to give a gnat a shower bath. But I might as well have asked Hughey for his left eye. When I get all through talkin', he says:

"Yeh, and just think how soft Willard would be for me! I'd steer him over in a corner, see, make a couple of passes at him, and get him thinkin' he's a chicken or somethin' like that—I could figure that out while I'm givin' him the work. Then, when I get him all readied up, I slip over the big wallop, see? Zam! All over!"

"All over is right!" I says. "That's where you'd be—all over! All over the ring and all through with box fightin'. Why——"

"The whole trouble with you," he butts in, like he's disgusted with me—"the whole trouble with you is that you're like all the rest of these ignorant guys. Anything *you* can't do, nobody can—that's the way you got it figured. I'll bet when this guy Will Power started this hypnotizin' thing everybody give him the laugh, too."

Now this here "ignorant-guy" stuff was a little more than I could take, the way things were breakin' for me; and, another thing, I'd been thinkin' over about this Will Power and all at once it comes to me.

"Why, you big boob!" I says, laughin' in his face. "That's the tip-off on you—Will Power ain't no guy."

"Ain't no guy?" he says. "What is he—a woman?"

Well, he had me! Know what I mean? I knew what Will Power was, all right, but I couldn't prove it. It would be like tryin' to explain a habeas corpse or somethin' like that—we all

know what they are, but there ain't one guy in a hundred could stand up and give a spiel on 'em—got me?

"Well, what's the matter?" asks Hughey, while I'm standin' there tryin' to think of some way to wise him up. "What's the matter—are you mad at me? How about the Will Power thing?"

"All I can say," I tells him, "is that *Will Power ain't a man and it ain't a* woman—it's somethin' in your head."

"Ha, ha!" he says. "That's rich! Somethin' in your head, eh? Where do you get that stuff? It may be in your head," he winds up, "but it ain't in mine; and, if you got it, you ought to stay with it because that's all you have got in your head, the way I figure it."

I let go, then, for the time bein', as they say, because this guy was gettin' a little too fast for me. I see there's no use tryin' to lay him off the idea that he could put 'em to sleep with his eye instead of his hands, so I make out I've fell for it, too. Meanwhile, I figure, I can hit on some way of showin' him he's all wrong.

I get up to the road house where Hughey is trainin' early the next mornin'. Everything is so quiet I figure the handlers has probably got Hughey out on the road for a work-out; but I take a flash in the doorway, anyhow, to make sure.

I lost my breath gettin' that flash. All the handlers is down at one end of the room, gathered around the weight-pullin' machine, and I thought at first one of them was tellin' 'em stories, like "Pat was walkin' up Broadway for the first time when——" Know what I mean? They're all standin' close like they can't afford to miss a word of this guy's stuff. He must have had some new ones, because he was goin' so big they don't make me till I'm on top of them.

"What kind of stuff is this?" I yells. "What are you doin'—framin' up a minstrel show? I got a good mind to put the rollers under the whole bunch of you. Where's Doyle?"

They scatter at that, and the guy that was entertainin' them jerks his thumb over in a corner. Doyle was in it. He's sittin' down on the floor with a little red book in his hand, and he's got his nose buried in it like it's Morgan's bank book. I lets out a yell, and *he don't even look up; just turns a* page and goes right on. The handlers commences to ease up to where they could get whatever was comin' off, and a couple of them gives me the laugh. I was so sore that if I'd had a gun on me I'd have crippled the gang of them. I runs over to Doyle and slaps him on the shoulder.

"Hey!" I hollers at him. "You big ham—are you studyin' how to tend bar or what?"

He never says a word, but he closes up the book with a snap and gets up from the floor. He's standin' right in front of me, and he twists his face up like he's goin' to strangle me or somethin', and starts makin' funny little passes at me with his hands.

"Go to sleep!" he says, in a heavy voice. "Go to sleep, go to sleep, go to sleep, go to sleep!"

He must have said it about eighty times—like it's a poem or somethin'.

I'm so sore by this time I can't talk—and this guy sees I can't, so he figures he's gettin' over.

"You're in the middle of the ocean now," he yells, "and it's a rough night." He waves his hands at me some more. "Swim out!" he says. "Swim out, swim out, swim out——"

"What are you—crazy?" I hollers, pushin' his hands away. "What do you mean by this stuff? Tryin' to kid me, eh? Well," I says, "you see what bunk that hypnotism thing is, don't you? You give me the works, and you don't see me goin' to sleep or doin' no swim-

min', do you? I guess that's the tip-off on you."

I don't know why it was I didn't wallop him. It might have been because—— Well, Hughey had an awful punch in that right arm of his.

He reaches down and picks up the little book, turnin' over the pages until he finds what he's lookin' for.

"I got it!" he says, kind of sudden. "I got it—you're *hostile* to me! It says right in here that no learner can do nothin' with a hostile guy right off the reel." He shuts the book and looks up at me. "At that," he goes on, "I'd have made you do it in another minute."

"What do you mean, hostile?" I says. I'm so mad I can't see him.

"Well," he says, "accordin' to the book, a hostile subject is a guy that's thinkin' of somethin' else when you're tryin' to hypnotize him. The kind that falls quickest for your work is them that has nothin' in their mind while you're handin' them the stuff. That ought to be easy for *you!*" he winds up.

Now while I'm framin' up a comeback for this, I notice one of the handlers has eased himself up and is standin' right in back of me, gettin' an earful. He's got one of them stupid smiles on his face, and the third flash I get at him makes me want to commit mayhem. I turns around on him all of a sudden and yells:

"What's yours? Are you another one of these hypnotizers, or George H. Hostile? Get over there and put some polish on that handrail over the punchin' bag or I'll let you have it on the chin! When I want your advice, I'll send you a wire."

He starts away sudden at that, but Doyle steps in between us and gives me a comical wink. He turns this guy around, shoves his head out like a turtle, and starts wavin' his hands in his face.

"Go to sleep!" he says. "Go to sleep—go to sleep—go to sleep—go to sleep!"

I hope I never take in another nickel if that big ham didn't shut his eyes, slide right down on the floor, *and commence to snore!*

I stands there lookin' at him, and I can't say a word. I felt like you do when the guy in the movies goes over the cliff. But Doyle just turns around, snaps his fingers at me, and throws out his chest.

"I guess that's poor, eh?" he says. "I told you this stuff would be soft for me. That guy is as good as dead till I tell him to wake up."

And, bo, this bird on the floor looked just like that!

The rest of the bunch heard this guy fall, and they comes runnin' up and crowdin' around—while the sleepin' beauty sounds like a sawmill workin' on a rush order. Doyle pokes me in the ribs and whispers:

"Get this—it's goin' to be good!"

It was! He waves his hands at these guys, and in a couple of minutes he's got three of them tellin' me they're automobiles and to look out or they'll run over me, while another guy is runnin' around the gym hollerin':

"Woof, woof! One side; I'm a mock turtle!"

Doyle slaps me on the back and yells:

"How's that? I'm there, ain't I?"

Say, for a minute he had me hypnotized! I have to lean against the wall to keep myself from joinin' this bird on the floor. As far as I can see, it's on the level, and I'm thinkin' maybe I can get Doyle forty weeks in vaudeville with this stuff, and——

I happened to look down just then, and I sees the guy on the floor lookin' at the rest of the gang out of the side of one eye. He's shakin' up and down like a platter of jelly, tryin' to keep from laughin'.

That was the tip-off to me.

I takes out my penknife and opens

the biggest blade. I see this guy is watchin' me with the other eye.

"I'm goin' to test this here sleeper of yours," I says to Doyle, loud enough for anybody in the precinct to hear. "If he's sure enough hypnotized, he won't bleed when I jab the knife in his arm."

"Go ahead," says Doyle. "Go ahead. You could shoot that guy right now, and he wouldn't even turn over. Go on; let him have the knife. *You can't scare me with that stuff!*"

I makes a quick pass at this heavy sleeper, but I'm too slow for him. He gives his body a jerk, rolls halfway across the floor, and opens his eyes. He beat the edge of that knife by an eyelash.

"Where am I?" he hollers, lookin' around the gym.

"Out of work!" I yells back.

Doyle grabs my arm. The three automobiles has quieted down a little, and the human mock turtle stops mockin'. They seen I'm in earnest.

"Leave them guys be!" says Doyle. "They didn't know what they was doin'. Besides, I need them to practice up on before I fight Sweeney." He sticks out his chest again. "I'll lay five to two," he says, "I could hypnotize more guys in half an hour than this Will Power could in a lifetime."

I give up, then—I quit cold. I just turned around and walked out of the gym, leavin' Doyle flat with his trained automobiles and mock turtle. This guy had stuck one over on *himself*. Know what I mean? He had hypnotized himself until he thought he could sure enough do it.

As I'm hurryin' down the street, madder than a guy with rheumatism at a dance, this guy who went to sleep in the gym comes runnin' after me and grabs me by the coat.

"Boss," he says, when he gets his breath, "I got to give you the low-down on that little thing up at the camp just now. I don't know whether whisky is sold by the pound, or whether you eat it with a knife, and I've never been inside an opium joint in my life—so it ain't any of them things that made me take the floor in the gym. But this guy Doyle was tryin' to hypnotize us all mornin' before you showed up, and he keeps gettin' madder and madder all the time when he sees it ain't takin' on us, see? Well, finally we fixes up that we'll make him *think* he can do it, figurin' if he did he'd call it a day and lay off us for a while. Why, we was lined up before him for two hours before you came in!"

Sore as I was, I had to laugh at this hick—he looked so sad and all that, thinkin' he'd have to live off snowballs for the rest of the winter.

"Well," I says finally, "I'll let bygones be bygones on one condition. The only way you can hold your job and make yourself solid with me is to go right back to the camp and tell Doyle you was only foolin' him and that he ain't no hypnotizer and——"

"*I* got to tell him?" butts in the handler.

"You said it!" I says. "And——"

But he waves his hand over his shoulder.

"Blooey!" he says. "There goes my job again!"

"What do you mean?" I asks.

"Boss," he says, leanin' over very confidential, "I would just as soon take a dive off the City Hall dome as go back there and hand Doyle anything like that now. I'm as game as the next one, but when I die I ain't goin' to get none of my friends in trouble on account of it. Why, that guy would think killin' me was lettin' me off *light* if I tried to tell him that! Nope!"

But I had been doin' a piece of thinkin', and I grabs him as he's goin' away. I knew that if Doyle found out this bunch had been kiddin' him, no matter how sore he'd get, he'd see there was nothin' to this hypnotizin' thing and lay

off of it for good. The time for the big fight was gettin' closer and closer, and I couldn't afford to take no more chances with my only means of support goin' around tryin' to hypnotize people. Not only that, but the thing that was keepin' me awake was thinkin' that he might try to hypnotize *Sweeney* when he got in the ring with him. So I pours all this into this handler, and give him arguments that started with callin' him a yellow bum and ended with slippin' him a five-case note. When I got through, he took a long look at the five and said he'd fall.

After that, things went along first cabin until the night of the fight. If Doyle was doin' any hypnotizin', it was while I was out to lunch or somethin', because I never saw none of it; so I figures the handler had earned his five.

We get down to the Garden at half past nine the night of the quarrel, and, bein' the star bout, we're due to go on at ten. I never seen Doyle so full of life before.

It made me leery right away—I knew somethin' was due to take place, as they say, but I couldn't figure out just what. I didn't get much chance to figure, anyhow, because in a few minutes we're in the ring, waitin' for Sweeney.

When I shades my eyes from the mercury lights over the ring and looks out in front, I thought at first the guys that was runnin' off the mill had advertised that the battle of Gettysburg would be put on with the original cast as a preliminary bout. Then I sees there's only twelve thousand out there, instead of everybody in the United States like I figured at first. They ain't makin' no more noise than a race riot, either, and there's crooks, cops, actors, judges, bankers, and so forth, all sittin' together in each other's laps. When they see us, they pull a piece of yellin' that almost shook off the guys hangin' on the posts up near the roof.

Sweeney and his mob of handlers climbs over the ropes, and then the crowd makes some *real* noise! Honest, a boiler factory would have been an undertaker's reception room alongside of this.

When Doyle comes to his corner, he's still smilin' and hummin' away to himself, and, just before the bell, he leans over and says to me:

"I'll make this guy the talk of the town! The papers will be full of it in the mornin'. Watch him do a funny fall *when I make him think he's a squirrel!*"

I nearly fell into the water bucket.

"What!" I yells. "What do you mean make him think he's a squirrel?"

The bell rings then, and he's in the middle of the ring without answerin'.

The handler I had slipped the five to tell Doyle he couldn't hypnotize touches me on the back and holds out a bill to me.

"Here's the overcoat money, boss!" he says. "I'm sorry; but when I get back to the camp that day, Doyle is workin' with Kid Young. The Kid stopped one with his chin just as I came in the door, and it took us a half hour to bring him around. I got a little yellow from seein' that, and I couldn't give Doyle that earful."

Well, I would have nailed him with the bucket if I hadn't been too busy watchin' Doyle. And he was somethin' to watch, believe me! There he is, dancin' all around Sweeney and makin' them nutty little passes at him with his hands—open hands at that! He's sayin' somethin', too, but I don't make it because they're on the other side of the ring. But whatever it is, it's got Sweeney buffaloed, because he's steppin' around, blinkin' and lookin' at Doyle kind of puzzled like. He ain't so puzzled, though, that he forgets what his hands are for, and he suddenly straightens up and shoots a hard left to Doyle's mouth. Back goes Hughey on his heels, and the crowd

goes off their chairs, yellin' for a knock-out. That was the tip-off to them. Sweeney had started all the others that way, and the mob wanted to see if Doyle would bounce when he hit the canvas.

He's in bad shape for a second, but he manages to keep out of reach of anything else till his head clears. But does he come back at Sweeney? Not to any large extent! He just moves up closer and gives him an extra nasty look, all the time wavin' his hands in front of his face. When they mill past our corner, I hear Doyle sayin':

"Go to sleep, go to sleep, go to sleep, go to sleep!"

"A hop fiend!" whispers a newspaper guy, pointin' to Doyle.

By the time they get the bell, Doyle is pretty well battered up, and he ain't started as much as one wallop at Sweeney!

I grabbed him the minute he comes to his corner, and, while the handlers is workin' over him, I shoots in his ear:

"You big ham! What are you tryin' to do—make a fool out of me? This guy will murder you if you don't start somethin'! He's beatin' you all over the ring, and if you could hear what they're callin' you around the ropes, you'd never look in a mirror again!"

"That darn bell queered the whole thing!" he says, lookin' past me.

"What do you mean?" I says.

"Well," he tells me, "I had this guy right where I wanted him when they pull the gong on me! Didn't you see him slidin' along the ropes? Well, he thought he was a snake then, and in another minute he'd have crawled out of the ring—and they go and ring the bell on me!"

I took a last chance.

"Can't you hypnotize him with one hand and nail him with the other?" I begs him.

"Nope!" he says, serious as typhoid fever. "I got to use 'em both! Don't worry, I'll get him in time! I'm havin' a little trouble because he nailed me on the eye. I can't see out of it, and that only leaves me one eye to work on him with—but if I get the breaks, he's gone!"

I thought *he* had gone clean nutty.

The bell rings for the second round, and he jumps to his feet.

"Here he goes!" he hollers to me. "Watch out for the funny stuff!"

He got as far as the middle of the ring when Sweeney nails him comin' in with a left uppercut to the chin. Oh, it was a bear! It started somewhere down in the basement, come right on up, and stops on Hughey's face! He went down so hard I jumped up to see if he was still in the buildin'.

When Doyle opens his eyes, they're puttin' out the lights in the Garden. Outside of us, there ain't nobody around but one special cop. He comes over and bangs on the ropes with his stick.

"Git that tramp of yours out of here!" he hollers. "This ain't the morgue!"

I don't say a word to Doyle till we're boostin' him over the ropes; then I can't hold it no longer.

"Now, you big ham!" I says. "Are you satisfied that this hypnotism stuff is the bunk?"

Up comes his head, and he looks right at me without a smile.

"No!" he says. "Why should I—*when it's just been proved to me that it ain't?*"

"That it *ain't?*" I yells. "What do you mean it ain't?"

"Why," he says, "just before Sweeney nailed me with that uppercut, he says, 'I'm goin' to put you to sleep, you big bum!' And he did, didn't he?" he says.

The Way of the North

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Raw Gold," "Piano Jim," Etc.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Four)

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FIRST RUNGS OF THE LADDER.

WHEN the elm before her window broke into leaf and the sodden winter skies were transformed into a warm spring vista of blue, Stella was singing a special engagement in a local vaudeville house that boasted a "big-time" bill. She had stepped up. She was stepping up. The silvery richness of her voice had carried her name already beyond local boundaries—as the singing master under whom she studied prophesied it would. In proof thereof, she received during April a feminine committee of two from Vancouver with an offer of three hundred dollars for her appearance in a series of three concerts under the auspices of the Woman's Musical Club, to be given in the ballroom of Vancouver's new million-dollar hostelry, the Granada. The date was mid-July. She took the offer under advisement, promising a decision in ten days.

The money tempted her. That was her greatest need now. Not for her daily bread, but for an accumulated fund that would enable her to reach New York and ultimately Europe, if that seemed the most direct route to her goal. She had no doubts about reaching it now. Confidence came to abide with her. She throve on work. With increasing salary, her fund grew. Coming from any other source, she would have accepted this further augmentation of it without hesitating. For a comparative beginner, it was a liberal offer.

But Vancouver was Fyfe's home town; it had been hers. Many people knew her. The local papers would feature her. She did not know how Fyfe would take it—she did not even know if there had been any open talk of their separation. Money, she felt, was a small thing beside opening old sores. For herself she was tolerably indifferent to Vancouver's social estimate of her or her acts. Nevertheless, so long as she bore Fyfe's name, she did not feel free to make herself a public figure there without his sanction.

So she wrote to him in some detail concerning the offer, and asked, point-blank, if it mattered to him.

His answer came with uncanny promptness, as if every mail connection had been made on the minute.

> If it is to your advantage to sing here, by all means accept. Why should it matter to me? I would even be glad to come and hear you sing if I could do so without stirring up vain longings and useless regrets. As for the other considerations you mention, they are of no weight at all. I never wanted to keep you in a glass case. Even if all were well between us I wouldn't have any feeling about your singing in public other than pride in your ability to command public favor with your voice. It's a wonderful voice, too big and fine a thing to remain obscure.
>
> JACK.

This novel began in the April 7th POPULAR, and may be ordered at news stands.

He added—evidently as an afterthought—a somewhat lengthy postscript:

I wish you would do something next month, not as a favor to me particularly, but to ease things along for Charlie and Linda. They are genuinely in love with each other. I can see you turning up your little nose at that. I know you've held a rather biased opinion of your brother and his works since that unfortunate winter. But it doesn't do to be too self-righteous. Charlie, then, was very little different from any rather headlong, self-centered, red-blooded youngster. I'm afraid I'm expressing myself badly. What I mean is that while he was drifting then into a piggy muddle, he had the sense to take a brace before his lapses became vices. Partly because—I've flattered myself—I talked to him like a Dutch uncle, and partly because he's cast too much in the same clean-cut mold that you are to let his natural passions run clean away with him. He'll always be more or less a profound egotist. But he'll be a good deal more of a man than you, perhaps, think.

I never used to think much of these matters. I suppose my own failure at a thing in which I was cocksure of success had made me a bit dubious about anybody I care for starting so serious an undertaking as marriage under any sort of handicap. I do like Charlie Benton and Linda Abbey. They are marrying in the face of her people's earnest attempt to break it up. The Abbeys are hopelessly conservative. Anything in the nature of our troubles aired in public would make it pretty tough sledding for Linda. As it stands, they are consenting very ungracefully; but, as a matter of family pride, intend to give Linda a big wedding.

Now, no one outside of you and me and —well, you and me—knows that there is a rift in our lute. I haven't been quizzed—naturally. It got about that you'd taken up voice culture with an eye to opera as a counteracting influence to the grief of losing your baby. I fostered that rumor—simply to keep gossip down until things shaped themselves positively. Once these two are married, they have started—Abbey père and mère will then be unable to frown on Linda's contemplated alliance with a family that's produced a divorce case.

I do not suppose you will take any legal steps until after those concerts. Until then please keep up the fiction that the house of Fyfe stills stands on a solid foundation—a myth that you've taken no measures to dispel since you left. When it does come it will be a sort of explosion, and I'd rather have it that way—one amazed yelp from our friends and the newspapers, and it's over.

Meantime, you will receive an invitation to the wedding. I hope you'll accept. You needn't have any compunctions about playing the game. You will not encounter me, as I have my hands full here, and I'm notorious in Vancouver for backing out of functions, anyway. It is not imperative that you should do this. It's merely a safeguard against a bomb from the Abbey fortress.

Linda is troubled by a belief that upon small pretext they would be very nasty, and she naturally doesn't want any friction with her folks. They have certain vague, but highly material, ambitions for her matrimonially, which she, a very sensible girl, doesn't subscribe to. She's a very shrewd and practical young person, for all her wholehearted passion for your brother. I rather think she pretty clearly guesses the breach in our rampart—not the original mistake in our overhasty plunge—but the wedge that divided us for good. If she does, and I'm quite sure she does, she is certainly good stuff, because she is most loyally your champion. I say that because Charlie had a tendency this spring to carp at your desertion of Roaring Lake. Things aren't going any too good with us, one way and another, and, of course, he, not knowing the real reason of your absence, couldn't understand why you stay away. I had to squelch him, and Linda abetted me successfully. However, that's beside the point. I hope I haven't irritated you. I'm such a dumb sort of brute generally. I don't know what imp of prolixity got into my pen. I've got it all off my chest now, or pretty near. J. H. F.

Stella sat thoughtfully gazing at the letter for a long time.

"I wonder?" she said aloud, and the sound of her own voice galvanized her into action. She put on a coat and went out into the mellow spring sunshine and walked till the aimless straying of her feet carried her to a little park that overlooked the far reach of the Sound and gave westward on the snowy Olympics, thrusting hoary and aloof to a perfect sky like their brother peaks that ringed Roaring Lake. And all the time her mind kept turning on a question whose asking was rooted neither in fact

nor necessity, an inquiry born of a sentiment she had never expected to feel.

Should she go back to Jack Fyfe?

She shook her head impatiently when she faced that question. Why tread the same bitter road again? But she put that self-interested phase of it aside, and asked herself candidly if she *could* go back and take up the old threads where they had been broken off and make life run smoothly along the old, quiet channels? She was as sure, as she was sure of the breath she drew, that Fyfe wanted her, that he longed for, and would welcome, her. But she was equally sure that the old illusions would never serve. She couldn't even make him happy, much less herself. Monohan—well, Monohan was a dead issue. He had come to the Charteris to see her, all smiles and eagerness. She had been able to look at him and through him—and cut him dead—do it without a flutter of her heart.

That brief and illuminating episode in Wain's had merely confirmed an impression that had slowly grown upon her, and her outburst of feeling that night had only been the overflowing of shamed anger at herself for letting his magnetic personality make so deep an impression on her that she could admit to him that she cared. She felt that she had belittled herself by that. But he was no longer a problem. She wondered now how he could ever have been. She recalled how once Jack Fyfe had soberly told her she would never sense life's real values while she nursed so many illusions. Monohan had been one of them.

"But it wouldn't work," she whispered to herself. "I couldn't do it. He'd know I only did it because I was sorry, because I thought I should, because the old ties—and they seem so many and so strong in spite of everything—were harder to break than the new road is to follow alone. He'd resent anything like pity for his loneliness. And if Monohan has made any real trouble it began over me, or at least it focused on me. And he might resent that. He's ten times a better man than I am a woman. He thinks about the other fellow's side of things. I'm just what he said about Charlie, self-centered, a profound egotist. If I really and truly loved Jack Fyfe I'd be a jealous little fury if he so much as looked at another woman. But I don't. And I don't see why I don't. I want to be loved. I want to love. I've always wanted that. So much so that I'll never dare trust my instincts about it again. I wonder why people like me exist, to go blundering about in the world playing havoc with myself and everybody else?"

Before she reached home that self-sacrificing mood had vanished in the face of sundry twinges of pride. Jack Fyfe hadn't asked her to come back. He never would ask her to come back. Of that she was quite sure. She knew the stony determination of him too well. Neither hope of heaven nor fear of hell would turn him aside when he had made a decision. If he ever had moments of irresolution he had successfully concealed any such weakness from those who knew him best. No one ever felt called upon to pity Jack Fyfe—and in those rock-ribbed qualities, Stella had an illuminating flash, perhaps lay the secret of his failure ever to stir in her that yearning tenderness which she knew herself to be capable of lavishing—which her nature impelled her to lavish on some one.

"Ah, well," she sighed, when she came back to her rooms and put Fyfe's letter away in a drawer. "I'll do the decent thing if they ask me. I wonder what Jack would say if he knew what I've been debating with myself this afternoon? I wonder if we were actually divorced and I'd made myself a reputation as a singer, and we happened to meet quite casually some

time, somewhere, just how we'd really feel about each other?"

She was still musing on that, in a detached, impersonal fashion, when she caught a car down to the theater for the matinée.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

The formally worded wedding card arrived in due course. Following close came a letter from Linda Abbey, a missive that radiated friendliness, and begged Stella to come a week before the date.

You're going to be pretty prominent in the public eye when you sing here. People are going to make a to-do over you. Ever so many have mentioned you since the announcement was made that you'll sing at the Granada concerts. I'm getting a lot of reflected glory as the future sister-in-law of a rising singer. So you may as well come and get your hand into the social game in preparation for being fussed over in July.

In the same mail was a characteristic note from Charlie, which ran:

Dear Sis: As the Siwashes say, long time I see you no. I might have dropped a line before, but you know what a punk correspondent I am. They tell me you're becoming a real noise musically. How about it? Can't you break away from the fame-and-fortune stuff long enough to be on hand when Linda and I get married? I wasn't invited to your wedding, but I'd like to have you at mine. Jack says it's up to you to represent the Fyfe connection, as he's too busy. I'll come over to Seattle and get you, if you say so.

She capitulated at that, and wrote saying that she would be there, and that she did not mind the trip alone in the least. She did not want Charlie asking pertinent questions about why she lived in such grubby quarters and practiced such strict economy in the matter of living.

Then there was the detail of arranging a break in her engagements, which ran continuously to the end of June. She managed that easily enough. She was becoming too great a drawing card for managers to curtly override her wishes.

Almost before she realized it, June was at hand. Linda wrote again urgently, and Stella took the night boat for Vancouver a week before the wedding day. Linda met her at the dock with a machine. Mrs. Abbey was the essence of cordiality when she reached the big Abbey house on Vancouver's aristocratic "heights," where the local capitalists, all those fortunate climbers, enriched by timber and mineral, grown wealthy in a decade through the great coast boom, segregated themselves in "villas" and "places" and "views," all painfully new, and sometimes garish, striving for an effect in landscape and architecture which the very intensity of the striving defeated. They were well-meaning folk, however, the Abbeys included.

Stella could not deny that she enjoyed the luxury of the Abbey ménage, the little, festive round which was shaping about Linda in these last days of her spinsterhood. She relished the change from unremitting work. It amused her to startle little groups with the range and quality of her voice when they asked her to sing. They made much ado over that, a genuine admiration that flattered Stella. It was easy for her to fall into the swing of that life. It was only a lapsing back to the old ways.

But she saw it now with a more critical vision. It was soft and satisfying and eminently desirable to have everything one wanted without the effort of striving for it—but a begging, wheedling game on the part of these women. They were, she told herself rather harshly, an incompetent, helpless lot, dependent, one and all, upon some man's favor or affection—just as she had been all her life, until the past few months. Some man had to work and scheme to pay the bills. She did not

know why this line of thought should arise, nor did she so far forget herself as to voice these social heresies. But it helped to reconcile her with her new-found independence, to put a less formidable aspect on the long, hard grind that lay ahead of her before she could revel in equal affluence gained by her own efforts. All that they had she desired—homes, servants, clothes, social standing, but she did not want these things bestowed upon her as a favor by some man, the emoluments of sex.

She expected she would have to be on her guard with her brother, even to dissemble a little; but she found him too deeply engrossed in what to him was the most momentous event of his career, impatiently awaiting the day, rather dreading the publicity of it.

"Why in Sam Hill can't a man and a woman get married without all this fuss?" he complained once. "Why should we make our private affairs a spectacle for the whole town?"

"Principally because mamma has her heart set on a spectacle," Linda laughed. "She'd hold up her hands in horror if she heard you. Decorated bridal bower, high-church dignitary, bridesmaids, orange blossoms, rice, and all. Mamma likes to show off. Besides, that's the way it's done in society. *And* the honeymoon."

They both giggled, as at some mirthful secret.

"Shall we tell her?" Linda nodded toward Stella.

"Sure!" Benton said. "I thought you had."

"The happy couple will spend their honeymoon on a leisurely tour of the Southern and Eastern States, remaining for some weeks in Philadelphia, where the groom has wealthy and influential connections. It's all prepared for the pay-a-purs," Linda whispered, with exaggerated secrecy, behind her hand.

Benton snorted.

"Can you beat that?" he appealed to Stella.

"And all the time," Linda continued, "the happy couple, unknown to every one, will be spending their days in peace and quietness in their shanty at Halfway Point. My, but mamma would rave, if she knew. Don't give us away, Stella. It seems so senseless to squander a lot of money gadding about on trains and living in hotels when we'd much rather be at home by ourselves. My husband's a poor young man, Stella. 'Pore but worthy.' He has to make his fortune before we start in spending it. I'm sick of all this spreading it on because dad has made a pile of money!" she broke out impatiently. "Our living used to be simple enough when I was a kid. I think I can relish a little simplicity again for a change. Mamma's been trying for four years to marry me off to her conception of an eligible man. It didn't matter a hang about his essential qualities so long as he had money and an assured social position."

"Forget that," Charlie counseled slangily. "I have all the essential qualities—and I'll have the money and social position, too. You watch my smoke."

"Conceited ninny!" Linda smiled. But there was no reproof in her tone—only pure comradeship and affection, which Benton returned so openly and unaffectedly that Stella got up and left them with a pang of envy, a dull little ache in her heart. She had missed that. It had passed her by, that clean, spontaneous fusing of two personalities in the biggest passion life holds. Marriage and motherhood she had known, not as the flowering of love, not as an eager fulfilling of her natural destiny, but as something extraneous, an avenue of escape from an irksomeness of living, a weariness with sordid things, which she knew now had obsessed her out of all proportion to their reality. She had never seen that tenderness glow in the eyes of a mating pair that

she did not envy them, that she did not feel herself hopelessly defrauded of her woman's heritage.

She went up to her room, moody, full of bitterness, and walked the thick-carpeted floor, the restlessness of her chafing spirit seeking the outlet of action.

"Thank the Lord I've got something to do, something that's worth doing," she whispered savagely. "If I can't have what I want, I can make my life embrace something more than just food and clothes and social trifling. If I had to sit and wait for each day to bring what it would, I believe I'd go clean mad."

A maid interrupted these self-communings to say that some one had called her over the telephone. Stella went down to the library. She wasn't prepared for the voice that came over the line, but she recognized it instantly as Fyfe's.

"Listen, Stella," he said. "I'm sorry this has happened, but I can't very well avoid it now without causing comment. I had no choice about coming to Vancouver. It was a business matter I couldn't neglect. And, as luck would have it, Abbey ran into me as I got off the train. On account of your being there, of course, he insisted that I come out for dinner. It'll look queer if I don't, as I can't possibly get a return train for the Springs before nine-thirty this evening. I accepted without stuttering, rather than leave any chance for the impression that I wanted to avoid you. Now, here's how I propose to fix it: I'll come out about two-thirty and pay a hurry-up, five-minute call. Then I'll excuse myself to Mrs. Abbey for inability to join them at dinner—press of important business takes me to Victoria, and so forth. That'll satisfy the conventions, and let us both out. I called you so you won't be taken by surprise. Do you mind?"

"Of course not," she answered instantly. "Why should I?"

There was a momentary silence.

"Well," he said at last, "I didn't know how you'd feel about it. Anyway, it will only be for a few minutes—and it's unlikely to happen again."

He hung up. Stella put the receiver back on the hook and looked at her watch. It lacked a quarter of two. In the room adjoining, Charlie and Linda were jubilantly wading through the latest "rag" song in a passable soprano and baritone, with Mrs. Abbey listening in outward resignation. Stella sat soberly for a minute, then joined them.

"Jack's in town," she informed them placidly, when the ragtime spasm ended. "He telephoned that he was going to snatch a few minutes between important business confabs to run out and see me."

"I could have told you that half an hour ago, my dear," Mrs. Abbey responded, with playful archness. "Mr. Fyfe will dine with us this evening."

"Oh!" Stella feigned surprise. "Why, he spoke of going to Victoria on the afternoon boat. He gave me the impression of mad haste—making a dash out here between breaths, as you might say."

"Oh, I hope he won't be called away on such short notice as that," Mrs. Abbey murmured politely.

She left the room presently. Out of one corner of her eye, Stella saw Linda looking at her queerly. Charlie had turned to the window, staring at the blue blur of the Lions across the Inlet.

"It's a wonder Jack would leave the lake," he said suddenly, "with things the way they are. I've been hoping for rain ever since I've been down. I'll be glad when we're on the spot again, Linda."

"Wishing for rain?" Stella echoed. "Why?"

"Fire," he said shortly. "I don't suppose you realize it, but there's been practically no rain for two months. It's getting hot. A few weeks of dry, warm

weather, and this whole country is ready to blow away. The woods are like a pile of shavings. That would be a fine wedding present—to be cleaned by fire. Every dollar I've got's in timber."

"Don't be a pessimist!" Linda said sharply.

"What makes you so uneasy now?" Stella asked thoughtfully. "There's always the fire danger in the dry months. That's been a bugaboo ever since I came to the lake."

"Yes, but never like it is this summer," Benton frowned. "Oh, well—no use borrowing trouble, I suppose."

Stella rose.

"When Jack comes, I'll be in the library," she said. "I'm going to read a while."

But the book she took up lay idle in her lap. She looked forward to that meeting with a curious mixture of reluctance and regret. She could not face it unmoved. No woman who has ever lain passive in a man's arms can ever again look into that man's eyes with genuine indifference. She may hate him or love him with a degree of intensity according to her nature, be merely friendly, or nurse a slow resentment; but there is always that intangible something which differentiates him from other men. Stella felt it now, shyness of him, a little dread of him, less sureness of herself, as he swung out of the machine and took the house steps with that effortless lightness on his feet that she remembered so well.

She heard him in the hall, his deep voice mingling with the thin, penetrating tones of Mrs. Abbey, and then the library door opened and he came in. Stella had risen. She stood now uncertainly at one corner of a big reading table, repressing an impulse to fly, finding herself, in his presence, stricken with a strange recurrence of the feeling she had first disliked him for arousing in her—a sense of needing to be on her guard, of impending assertion of a will infinitely more powerful than her own.

But that was, she told herself, only a state of mind, and Fyfe put her quickly at her ease. He came up to the table and seated himself on the edge of it, an arm's length from her, swinging one foot free. He looked at her intently. There was no shadow of expression on his face. Only in his clear eyes lurked a gleam of feeling.

"Well, lady," he said at length, "you're looking fine. How goes everything?"

"Fairly well," she answered.

"Seems odd—doesn't it?—to meet like this," he ventured. "I'd have dodged it, if it had been politic. As it is, there's no harm done, I imagine. Mrs. Abbey assured me we'd be free from interruption. If the exceedingly cordial dame had an inkling of how things stand between us, I dare say she'd be holding her breath about now."

"Why do you talk like that, Jack?" Stella protested nervously.

"Well, I have to say something," he remarked, after a moment's reflection. "I can't sit here and just look at you. That would be rude, not to say embarrassing."

Stella bit her lip.

"I don't see why we can't talk like any other man and woman for a few minutes," she observed.

"I do," he said quietly. "You know why, too, if you stop to think. I'm the same old Jack Fyfe, Stella. I don't think much where you are concerned. I just feel. And that doesn't lend itself readily to impersonal chatter."

"How do you feel?" she asked, meeting his gaze squarely. "If you don't hate me, you must at least rather despise me."

"Neither," he said slowly. "I admire your grit, lady. You broke away from everything and made a fresh start. You asserted your own individuality in a fashion that rather surprised me.

Maybe the incentive wasn't what it might have been—but the result is, or promises to be. I was only a milestone. Why should I hate or despise you because you recognized that and passed on? I had no business setting myself up for an end of your road instead of the beginning. I meant to have it that way until the kid—well, fate took a hand there. Pshaw!" He broke off, with a quick gesture. "Let's talk about something else."

Stella laid one hand on his knee. Unbidden tears were crowding up in her gray eyes.

"You were good to me," she whispered, "but just being good wasn't enough for a perverse creature like me. I couldn't be a sleek pussycat, comfortable beside your fire. I'm full of queer longings. I want wings. I must be a variation from the normal type of woman. Our marriage didn't touch the real me at all, Jack. It only scratched the surface; and sometimes I'm afraid to look deep for fear of what I'll see. Even if another man hadn't come along and stirred up a temporary tumult in me, I couldn't have gone on forever."

"A temporary tumult," Fyfe mused. "Have you thoroughly chucked that illusion? I knew you would, of course, but I had no idea how long it would take you."

"Long ago," she answered. "Even before I left you I was shaky about that. There were things I couldn't reconcile, but pride wouldn't let me admit it. I can't even explain it to myself."

"I can," he said, a little sadly. "You've never poured out that big, warm heart of yours on a man. It's there, always has been there, those concentrated essences of passion. Every unattached man's a possible factor, a potential lover. Nature has her own devices to gain her end. I couldn't be the one. We started wrong. I saw the mistake of that when it was too late. Monohan, a highly magnetic animal, came along at a time when you were peculiarly and rather blindly receptive. That's all. Sex—you have it in a word. It couldn't stand any stress, that sort of attraction. I knew it would only last until you got one illuminating glimpse of the real man of him. But I don't want to talk about him. He'll keep. Some time you'll really love a *man*, Stella. He'll be a very lucky mortal. There's an erratic streak in you, lady, but there's a bigger streak that's fine and good and true. You'd have gone through with it to the bitter end if Jack, junior, hadn't died. The weaklings don't do that. Neither do they cut loose as you did, burning all their economic bridges behind them. Do you know that it was over a month before I found out that you'd turned your private balance back into my account? I suppose there was a keen personal satisfaction in going on your own, and making good from the start. Only I couldn't rest until—until——"

His voice trailed huskily off into silence. The gloves in his left hand were doubled and twisted in his uneasy fingers. Stella's eyes were blurred.

"Well, I'm going," he said shortly. "Be good."

He slipped off the table and stood erect, a wide, deep-chested man, tanned brown, his fair hair, with its bronze tinge, lying back in a smooth wave from his forehead, blue eyes bent on her, hot with a slumbering fire.

Without warning, he caught her close in his arms, so that she could feel the pounding of his heart against her breast, kissed her cheeks, her hair, the round, firm white neck, with lips that burned. Then he held her off at arm's length.

"That's how *I* care," he said defiantly. "That's how I want you. No other way. I'm a one-woman man, lady. Some time you may love like that, and, if you do, you'll know how I feel. I've watched you sleeping beside

me, and ached because I couldn't kindle the faintest glow of the real thing in you. . I'm sick with a miserable sense of failure—the only thing I've ever failed at—and the biggest, most complete failure I can conceive of—to love a woman in every way desirable, to have her and yet never have her."

He caught up his hat, and the door clicked shut behind him. A minute later, Stella saw him step into the tonneau of the car. He never looked back.

And she fled to her room, stunned, half frightened, wholly amazed at this outburst. Her face was damp with his lip pressure, damp and warm. Her arms tingled with the grip of his. The blood stood in her cheeks like a danger signal, flooding in hot, successive waves to the roots of her thick brown hair.

"If I thought—I could," she whispered into her pillow. "I'd try. But I daren't. I'm afraid. It's just a mood. I know it is. I've had it before. A-ah! I'm a spineless jellyfish, a weathercock that whirls to every emotional breeze—and I won't be! I'll stand on my own feet, if I can!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FIRE BEHIND THE SMOKE.

This is no intimate chronicle of Charlie Benton and Linda Abbey, save in so far as they naturally furnish a logical sequence in what transpired. Therefore, the details of their nuptials are of no particular concern. They were wedded, ceremonially dined as befitted the occasion, and departed upon their hypothetical honeymoon, surreptitiously abbreviated from an extravagant swing over half of North America to seventy miles by rail and twenty by water, and a month of blissful seclusion, which suited those two far better than any amount of Pullman touring, besides leaving them money in pocket.

When they were gone, Stella caught the next boat for Seattle. She had drawn fresh breath in the meantime, and, while she felt tenderly, almost maternally, sorry for Jack Fyfe, she swung back to the old attitude. Even granting, she argued, that she could muster courage to take up the mantle of wifehood where she laid it off, there was no surety that they could do more than compromise. There was the stubborn fact that she had openly declared her love for another man, that by her act she had plunged her husband into far-reaching conflict; such a conflict existed. She could put her finger on no concrete facts. But it was in the air. She heard whispers of a battle between giants, a financial duel to the death—with all the odds against Jack Fyfe.

Win or lose, there would be scars; and the struggle, if not of and by her deed, had at least sprung into malevolent activity through her. Men, she told herself, do not forget these things. They rankle. Jack Fyfe was only human. No, Stella felt that she could only come safe to the old port by virtue of a passion that could match Fyfe's own; and she put that rather sadly beyond her, beyond the possibilities. She had felt stirrings of it, but not to endure. She was proud and sensitive, and growing wise with bitterly accumulated experience. It had to be all or nothing with them, a cleaving together complete enough to erase and forever obliterate all that had gone before.

And since she could not see that as a possibility, there was nothing to do but play the game according to the cards she held. Of these, the trump was work—the inner glow that comes of something worth while done toward a definite, purposeful end. She took up her singing again with a distinct relief.

Time passed quickly and uneventfully enough between the wedding day and the date of her Granada engagement. It seemed a mere breathing space before the middle of July rolled around

and she was once more aboard a Vancouver boat. In the interim, she had received a letter from the attorney who had wound up her father's estate intimating that there was now a market demand for that oil stock, and should he sell, or hold for a rise in price which seemed reasonably sure? Stella telegraphed her answer. If that left-over of a speculative period would bring a few hundred dollars it would never be of greater service to her than now.

She took a day steamer. All the upper reach of Puget Sound basked in its normal midsummer haze. That great region of island-dotted sea spread between the rugged Olympics and the foot of the Coast Range lay bathed in summer sun, untroubled, somnolent. But nearing the international boundary, the *Charlotte* drove her twenty-knot way into a thickening atmosphere. Northward from Victoria, the rugged shores that line those inland waterways began to appear blurred. Just north of Active Pass, where the steamers take to the open gulf again, a vast bank of smoke flung up blue and gray, a rolling mass. The air was pungent, oppressive; and when the *Charlotte* spanned the thirty-mile gap between Vancouver Island and the mainland shore, she nosed into the Lion's Gate under a slow bell, through a smoke pall thick as Bering fog. Stella's recollection swung back to Charlie's uneasy growl of a month earlier. Fire. Throughout the midsummer season there was always the danger of fire breaking out in the woods. Not all the fire-ranger patrols could guard against the carelessness of fishermen and campers.

"It's a tough summer over here for the timber owners," she heard a man remark. "I've been twenty years on the coast, and never saw the woods so dry."

"Dry's no name," his neighbor responded. "It's like tinder. A cigarette stub'll start a blaze forty men couldn't put out. It's me that knows it. I've got four limits on the North Arm, and there's fire on two sides of me. You bet I'm praying for rain!"

"They say the country between Chehalis and Roaring Lake is one big blaze," the first man observed.

"So?" the other replied. "Pity, too. Fine timber in there. I come near buying some timber on the lake this spring. Some stuff that was on the market as a result of that Abbey-Monohan split. Glad I didn't, now. I'd just as soon have *all* my money out of timber this season."

They moved away in the press of disembarking, and Stella heard no more of their talk. She took a taxi to the Granada, and she bought a paper in the foyer before she followed the bell boy to her room. She had scarcely taken off her hat and settled down to read, when the telephone rang. Linda's voice greeted her when she answered.

"I called, on the chance that you took the morning boat," Linda said. "Can I run in? I'm just down for the day. I won't be able to hear you sing, but I'd like to see you, dear."

"Can you come right now?" Stella asked. "Come up, and we'll have something served up here. I don't feel like running the gantlet of the dining room just now."

"I'll be there in a few minutes," Linda answered.

Stella went back to her paper. She hadn't noticed any particular stress laid on forest fires in the Seattle dailies, but she could not say that of this Vancouver sheet. The front page reeked of smoke and fire. She glanced through the various items for news of Roaring Lake, but found only a brief mention. It was "reported" and "stated" and "rumored" that fire was raging at one or two points there, statements that were overshadowed by positive knowledge of greater areas nearer at hand burning with a fierceness that could be seen and

smelled. The local papers had feature stuff enough in fires that threatened the very suburbs of Vancouver without going so far afield as Roaring Lake.

Linda's entrance put a stop to her reading, without, however, changing the direction of her thought. For, after an exchange of greetings, Linda divulged the source of her worried expression, which Stella had immediately remarked.

"Who wouldn't be worried?" Linda said, "with the whole country on fire, and no telling when it may break out in some unexpected place and wipe one out of house and home!"

"Is it so bad as that at the lake?" Stella asked uneasily. "There's not much in the paper. I was looking."

"It's so bad," Linda returned, with a touch of bitterness, "that I've been driven to the Springs for safety; that every able-bodied man on the lake who can be spared is fighting fire. There has been one man killed, and there's half a dozen loggers in the hospital suffering from burns and other hurts. Nobody knows where it will stop. Charlie's limits have barely been scorched, but there's fire all along one side of them. A change of wind—and there you are. Jack Fyfe's timber is burning in a dozen places. We've been praying for rain, and choking in the smoke for a week."

Stella looked out of the north window. From the ten-story height she could see ships lying in the stream, vague hulks in the smoky pall that shrouded the harbor.

"I'm sorry," she whispered.

"It's devilish," Linda went on. "Like groping in the dark, and being afraid—for me. I've been married a month, and for ten days I've only seen my husband at brief intervals when he comes down in the launch for supplies, or to bring an injured man; and he doesn't tell me anything except that we stand a fat chance of losing everything. I sit there at the Springs and look at that smoke wall hanging over the water, and wonder what goes on up there; and at night there's the red glow, very faint and far. That's all. I've been doing nursing at the hospital to help out, and to keep from brooding. I wouldn't be down here now, only for a list of things the doctor needs, which he thought could be gotten quicker if some one attended to it personally. I'm taking the evening train back."

"I'm sorry," Stella repeated.

She said it rather mechanically. Her mind was spinning a thread upon which, strung like beads, slid all the manifold succession of things that had happened since she came first to Roaring Lake. Linda's voice, continuing, broke into her thoughts.

"I suppose I shouldn't be croaking like a bird of ill omen into your ear, when you have to throw yourself, heart and soul, into that concert to-morrow," she said contritely. "I wonder why that Ancient Mariner way of seeking relief from one's troubles by pouring them into another ear is such a universal trait? You aren't vitally concerned, after all, and I am. Let's have that tea, dear, and talk about less grievous things. I still have one or two things to get in the shops, too."

After they had finished the food that Stella ordered sent up, they went out together. Later, Stella saw her off on the train.

"Good-by, dear," Linda said from the coach window. "I'm just selfish enough to wish you were going back with me—I wish you could sit with me on the bank of the lake aching and longing for your man up there in the smoke, as I ache and long for mine. Misery loves company."

Stella's eyes were clouded as the train pulled out. Something in Linda Benton's parting words made her acutely lonely, dispirited, out of joint with the world she was deliberately

fashioning for herself. Into Linda's life something big and elemental had come. The butterfly of yesterday had become the strong man's mate of today. Linda's heart was unequivocally up there in the smoke and flame with her man fighting for their mutual possessions, hoping with him, fearing for him, longing for him, secure in the knowledge that if nothing else was left them they had each other. It was a rare and beautiful thing to feel like that. And beyond that sorrowful vision of what she lacked to achieve any real and enduring happiness, there loomed also a self-torturing conviction that she herself had set in motion those forces which now threatened ruin for her brother and Jack Fyfe.

There was no logical proof of this. Only intuitive, subtle suggestions gleaned here and there—shadowy finger posts which pointed to Monohan as a deadly hater, and with a score chalked up against Fyfe to which she had unconsciously added. He had desired her, and twice Fyfe had treated him like an urchin caught in mischief. She recalled how Monohan sprang at him like a tiger that day on the lake shore. She realized how bitter a humiliation it must have been to suffer that sardonic cuffing at Fyfe's hands. Monohan wasn't the type of man who would ever forget or forgive either that or the terrible grip on his throat.

Even at the time she had sensed this, and dreaded what it might ultimately lead to. Even while her being answered eagerly to the physical charm of him, she had fought against admitting to herself what desperate intent might have lain back of the killing of Billy Dale—a shot that Lefty Howe declared was meant for Fyfe. She had long outgrown Monohan's lure, but if he had come to her or written to make out a case for himself when she first went to Seattle, she would have accepted his word against anything. Her heart would have fought for him against the logic of her brain.

But—she had had a long time to think, to compare, to digest all that she knew of him, much that was subconscious impression rising late to the surface, a little that from various sources she heard. The sum total gave her a man of rank passions, of rare and merciless finesse where his desires figured, a man who got what he wanted by whatever means most fitly served his need. Greater than any craving to win a woman would be the measure of his rancor against a man who humiliated him, thwarted him. She could understand how a man like Monohan would hate a man like Jack Ffye —would nurse and feed on the venom of his hate until setting a torch to Fyfe's timber would be a likely enough counterstroke.

She shrank from the thought. Yet it lingered until she felt guilty. Though it made no material difference to her that Fyfe might or might not face ruin, she could not, before her own conscience, evade responsibility. The powder might have been laid—but her folly had touched spark to the fuse, as she saw it. That seared her like a pain, far into the night. For every crime a punishment; for every sin a penance. Her world had taught her that. She had never danced; she had only listened to the piper and longed to dance, as nature had fashioned her to do. But the piper was sending his bill. She surveyed it wearily, emotionally bankrupt, wondering in what coin of the soul she would have to pay.

CHAPTER XXX.

A RIDE BY NIGHT.

Stella sang in the gilt ballroom of the Granada next afternoon, behind the footlights of a miniature stage, with the blinds drawn and a few hundred of Vancouver's social elect critically,

expectantly listening. She sang her way straight into the heart of that audience with her opening number. This was on Wednesday. Friday she sang again, and Saturday afternoon.

When she came back to her room after that last concert, wearied with the effort of listening to chattering women and playing the gracious lady to an admiring contingent which insisted upon making her last appearance a social triumph, she found a letter forwarded from Seattle. She slit the envelope. A typewritten sheet infolded a green slip—a check. She looked at the figures, scarcely comprehending until she read the letter. Mr. Lander wrote for the firm:

> We take pleasure in handing you herewith our check for nineteen thousand five hundred dollars, proceeds of oil stock sold as per your telegraphed instructions, less brokerage charges. We sold same almost at par, and trust this will be satisfactory.

She looked at the check again. Nineteen thousand five hundred—payable to her order. Two years ago such a sum would have lifted her to plutocratic heights, filled her with pleasurable excitement, innumerable anticipations. Now it stirred her less than the three hundred dollars she had just received from the Granada concert committee. She had earned that, had given for it due measure of herself. This other had come without effort, without expectation. And less than she had ever needed money before did she now require such a sum.

Yet she was sensibly aware that this windfall meant a short cut to things which she had only looked to attain by plodding over economic hills. She could say good-by to singing in photoplay houses, to vaudeville engagements, to concert work in provincial towns. She could hitch her wagon to a star and go straight up the avenue that led to a career—if it were in her to achieve greatness. Pleasant dreams in which the buoyant ego soared—until the logical interpretation of her ambitions brought her to a more practical consideration of ways and means, and that in turn confronted her with the fact that she could leave the Pacific coast to-morrow morning if she so chose.

Why should she not so choose?

She was her own mistress, free as the wind. Fyfe had said that. She looked out into the smoky veil that shrouded the water front and the hills across the inlet, that swirled and eddied above the giant firs in Stanley Park—and her mind flicked back to Roaring Lake where the "Red Flower" of Kipling's Jungle Book bloomed to her husband's ruin. Did it? She wondered. She could not think of him as beaten, bested in any undertaking. She had never been able to think of him in those terms. Always to her he had conveyed the impression of a superman. Always she had been a little in awe of him, his strength, his patient, inflexible determination, glimpsing under his habitual repression certain tremendous forces. She could not conceive him as a broken man.

Staring out into the smoky air, she wondered if the fires at Roaring Lake still ravaged that noble forest; if Fyfe's resources, like her brother's, were wholly involved in standing timber, and if that timber was doomed? She craved to know. Secured herself by that green slip in her hand against every possible need, she wondered if it were ordained that the two men whose possession of material resources had molded her into what she was to-day should lose all, be reduced to the same stress that had made her an unwilling drudge in her brother's kitchen. Then she recalled that for Charlie there was an equivalent sum due—a share like her own. At the worst he had the nucleus of another fortune.

So there remained only Fyfe. She refused to admit that ultimate disaster

had overtaken, could overtake, him—denied it, because deep in the chambers of her heart she felt culpable, saw link by link her part in the forging of a chain of circumstances that filled her with sorrow and pity and dismay.

Curled among the pillows of her bed that night, she looked over the evening papers, read with a swift heart sinking that the Roaring Lake fire was assuming terrific proportions, that nothing but a deluge of rain would stay it now. And more significantly, except for a minor blaze or two, the fire raged almost wholly upon and around the Fyfe block of limits.

She laid aside the papers, switched off the lights, and lay staring wide-eyed at the dusky ceiling.

At twenty minutes of midnight she was called to the door of her room to receive a telegram. It was from Linda, and it read:

Charlie badly hurt. Can you come?

Stella reached for the telephone receiver. The night clerk at the C. P. R. depot told her the first train she could take left at six in the morning. She hung up and considered. That meant reaching the Springs at nine-thirty. It was midnight now. Nine and a half hours to sit with idle hands, in suspense. She did not know what tragic dénouement awaited there, what she could do once she reached there. She knew only that a fever of impatience burned in her. The message had strung her suddenly taut, as if a crisis had arisen in which willy-nilly she must take a hand.

So, groping for the relief of action, some method of spanning that nine hours' wait, her eye fell upon a card tucked beside the telephone case. She read it, her brows puckered.

TAXIS AND TOURING CARS.
Anywhere . . . . . Any time

She took down the receiver again and asked for Seymour 9X.

"Western Taxi," a man's voice drawled.

"I want to reach Roaring Hot Springs in the shortest time possible," she told him rather breathlessly. "Can you furnish me a machine and a reliable chauffeur?"

"Roaring Springs?" he repeated. "How many passengers?"

"One. Myself."

"Just a minute."

She heard a faint burble of talk away at the other end of the wire. Then the same voice speaking crisply:

"We gotta big six roadster, and a first-class driver. It'll cost you seventy-five dollars—in advance."

"Your money will be waiting for you here," she answered calmly. "How soon can you bring the car around to the Hotel Granada?"

"In ten minutes, if you say so."

"Say twenty minutes, then."

"All right."

She dressed herself, took the elevator down to the lobby, instructed the night clerk to have a maid pack her trunk and send it by express to Hopyard, care of St. Allwoods Hotel on the lake. Then she walked out to the broad-stepped carriage entrance.

A low-hung, long-hooded yellow car stood there, exhaust purring faintly. She paid the driver, sank into the soft upholstering beside him, and the big six slid out into the street. There was no traffic. In a few minutes they were on the outskirts of the city, the long asphalt ribbon of King's Way lying like a silver band between green, bushy walls. They crossed the last car track. The driver spoke to her out of one corner of his mouth:

"Wanna make time, huh?"

"I want to get to Roaring Lake as quickly as you can drive it—without taking chances."

"I know the road pretty well," he assured her. "Drove a party clear to Rosebud day before yesterday. I'll do

the best I can. Can't drive too fast at night. Too smoky."

She could not gauge his conception of real speed if the gait he struck was not "too fast." They were through New Westminster and rolling across the Fraser bridge before she was well settled in the seat, breasting the road with a lurch and a swing at the curves, a noise under that long hood like giant bees in an empty barrel.

Ninety miles of road—good, bad, and indifferent, forest and farm and rolling hill and the swamps of Sumas Prairie—lies between Vancouver and Roaring Lake. At four in the morning, with dawn an hour old, they woke the Rosebud ferryman to cross the river. Twenty mintes after that Stella was stepping stiffly out of the machine before Roaring Springs hospital. The doctor's Chinaman was abroad in the garden. She beckoned him.

"You sabe Mr. Benton—Charlie Benton?" she asked. "He in doctor's house?"

The Chinaman pointed across the road. "Mist' Bentle obah dah," he said. "Velly much sick. Missa Bentle lib dah, all same gleen house."

Stella ran across the way. The front door of the green cottage stood wide. An electric droplight burned in the front room, though it was broad day. When she crossed the threshold she saw Linda sitting in a chair, her arms folded on the table edge, her head resting on her hands. She was asleep. She did not raise her head till Stella shook her shoulder.

Linda Abbey had been a pretty girl, very fair, with apple-blossom skin and a wonderfully expressive face. It gave Stella a shock to see her now, to gauge her suffering by the havoc it had wrought. Linda looked old, haggard, drawn. There was a weary droop to her mouth, her eyes were dull, lifeless, just as one might look who is utterly exhausted in mind and body. Oddly enough she spoke first of something irrelevant, inconsequential.

"I fell asleep," she said heavily. "What time is it?"

Stella looked at her watch.

"Half past four," she answered. "How is Charlie? What happened to him?"

"Monohan shot him."

Stella caught her breath. She hadn't been prepared for that.

"Is he—is he——" She could not utter the words.

"He'll get better. Wait!" Linda rose stiffly from her seat. A door in one side of the room stood ajar. She opened it, and Stella, looking over her shoulder, saw her brother's tousled head on a pillow. A nurse in uniform sat beside his bed. Linda closed the door silently.

"Come in to the kitchen where we won't make a noise," she whispered.

A fire burned in the kitchen stove. Linda sank into a willow rocker.

"I'm weary as Atlas," she said. "I've been fretting for so long. Then late yesterday afternoon they brought him home to me—like that. The doctor was probing for the bullet when I wired you. I was in a panic then, I think. Half past four. How did you get here so soon? How could you? There's no train."

Stella told her.

"Why should Monohan shoot him?" she broke out. "For God's sake talk, Linda!"

There was a curious impersonality in Linda's manner, as if she stood aloof from it all, as if the fire of her vitality had burned out. She lay back in her chair with eyelids drooping, speaking in dull, lifeless tones:

"Monohan shot him because Charlie came on him in the woods setting out fresh fire. They've suspected him of that, or some one in his pay, and they've been watching. There were two other men with Charlie, so there is no mis-

take. Monohan got away. That's all I know. Oh, but I'm tired! I've been hanging onto myself for so long. About daylight, after we knew for sure that Charlie was over the hill, something seemed to let go in me. I'm awful glad you came, Stella. Can you make a cup of tea?"

Stella could, and did, but she drank none of it herself. A dead weight of apprehension lay like lead in her breast. Her conscience pointed a deadly finger. First Billy Dale, now her brother, and, sandwiched in between, the loose fire furies which were taking toll in bodily injury and ruinous loss.

Yet she was helpless. The matter was wholly out of her hands, and she stood aghast before it, much as the small child stands aghast before the burning house he has fired by accident.

Fyfe next. That was the ultimate, the culmination, which would leave her forever transfixed with remorseful horror. The fact that already the machinery of the law which would eventually bring Monohan to book for the double lawlessness of arson and attempted homicide must be in motion, that the Provincial police would be hard on his trail did not occur to her. She could only visualize him progressing step by step from one lawless deed to another. And in her mind every step led to Jack Fyfe, who had made a mock of him. She found her hands clenching till the nails dug deep.

Linda's head drooped over the teacup. Her eyelids blinked.

"Dear," Stella said tenderly, "come and lie down. You're worn out."

"Perhaps I'd better," Linda muttered. "There's another room in there."

Stella tucked the weary girl into the bed, and went back to the kitchen, and sat down in the willow rocker. After another hour the nurse came out and prepared her own breakfast. Benton was still sleeping. He was in no danger, the nurse told Stella. The bullet had driven cleanly through his body, missing by a miracle any vital part, and lodged in the muscles of his back, whence the surgeon had removed it. Though weak from shock, loss of blood, excitement, he had rallied splendidly, and fallen into a normal sleep.

Later the doctor confirmed this. He made light of the wound. One couldn't kill a young man as full of vitality as Charlie Benton with an ax, he informed Stella, with an optimistic smile. Which lifted one burden from her mind.

The night nurse went away, and another from the hospital took her place. Benton slept. Linda slept. The house was very quiet. To Stella, brooding in that kitchen chair, it became oppressive, that funereal hush. When it was drawing near ten o'clock she walked up the road past the corner store and post office, and so out to the end of the wharf.

The air was hot and heavy, pungent, gray with the smoke. Farther along St. Allwoods bulked mistily amid its grounds. The crescent of shore line half a mile distant was wholly obscured. Up over the eastern mountain range the sun, high above the murk, hung like a bloody orange, rayless and round. No hotel guests strolled by pairs and groups along the bank. She could understand that no one would come for pleasure into that suffocating atmosphere. Caught in that great bowl of which the lake formed the watery bottom, the smoke eddied and rolled like a cloud of mist.

She stood a while gazing at the glassy surface of the lake where it spread to her vision a little way beyond the piles. Then she went back to the green cottage.

Benton lifted alert, recognizing eyes when she peeped in the bedroom door.

"Hello, sis!" he greeted in strangely subdued tones. "When did you blow in? I thought you'd deserted the sinking ship completely. Come on in!"

She winced inwardly at his words, but made no outward sign, as she came up to his bedside. The nurse went out.

"Perhaps you'd better not talk," she said.

"Oh, rats!" he retorted feebly. "I'm all right. Sore as the mischief and weak. But I don't feel as bad as I might. Linda still asleep?"

"I think so," Stella answered.

"Poor kid," he breathed, "it's been tough on her. Well, I guess it's been tough on everybody. He turned out to be some bad actor, this Monohan party. I never did like the beggar. He was a little too high-handed in his smooth, kid-glove way. But I didn't suppose he'd try to burn up a million dollars' worth of timber to satisfy a grudge. Well, he put his foot in it proper at last. He'll get a good long jolt in the pen, if the boys don't beat the constables to him and take him to pieces."

"He did start the fire then?" Stella muttered.

"I guess so," Benton replied. "At any rate, he kept it going. Did it by his lonesome, too. Jack suspected that. We were watching for him as well as fighting fire. He'd come down from the head of the lake in that speed boat of his, and daylight caught him before he could get back to where he had her cached—after starting a string of little fires in the edge of my north limit. He had it in for me, too, you know; I batted him over the head with a pike pole here at the wharf one day this spring. So he plunked me as soon as I hollered at him. I wish he'd done it earlier in the game. We might have saved a lot of good timber. As it was we couldn't do much. Every time the wind changed it would break out in a new place—too often to be accidental."

"How is it going to end, the fire?" Stella forced herself to ask. "Will you and Jack be able to save any timber?"

"If it should rain hard, and if in the meantime the boys keep it from jumping the fire trails we've cut, I'll get by with most of mine," he said. "But Jack's done for. He won't have anything but his donkeys and gear, and part of a cedar limit on the Tyee which isn't paid for. He had practically everything tied up in that block of timber around the Point. Monohan made him spend money like water to hold his own. Jack's broke."

Stella's head drooped. Benton reached out an ax-calloused hand, all grimy and browned from the stress of fire fighting, and covered her soft fingers that rested on his bed.

"It's a pity everything's gone to pot like that, Stell," he said softly. "I've grown a lot wiser in human ways the last two years. You taught me a lot, and Jack a lot, and Linda the rest. It seems a blamed shame you and Jack came to a fork in the road. Oh, he never chirped. I've just guessed it the last few weeks. I owe him a lot that he'll never let me pay back in anything but good will. I hate to see him get the worst of it from every direction. He grins and doesn't say anything. But I know it hurts. There can't be anything much wrong between you two. Why don't you forget your petty-larceny troubles and start all over again?"

"I can't," she whispered. "It wouldn't work. There's too many scars. Too much that's hard to forget."

"Well, you know about that better than I do," Benton said thoughtfully. "It all depends on how you *feel*."

The poignant truth of that struck miserably home to her. It was not a matter of reason or logic, of her making any sacrifice for her conscience sake. It depended solely upon the existence of an emotion she could not definitely invoke. She was torn by so many emotions, not one of which she could be sure was the vital, the necessary, one. Her heart did not cry out for Jack

Fyfe, except in a pitying tenderness, as she used to feel for Jack, junior, when he bumped and bruised himself. She had felt that before, and held it too weak a crutch to lean upon.

The nurse came in with a cup of broth for Benton, and Stella got away with a dumb ache in her breast, a leaden sinking of her spirits, and went out to sit on the porch steps. The minutes piled into hours, and noon come. Linda wakened. Stella forced herself to swallow a cup of tea, to eat food. Then she left Linda sitting with her husband and went back to the porch steps again.

As she sat there a man dressed in the blue shirt and Mackinaw trousers of the logger turned in off the road, a burly woodsman that she recognized as one of Jack Fyfe's crew.

"Well," said he, "if it ain't Mrs. Jack. Say—ah——"

He broke off suddenly, a perplexed look on his face, an uneasiness, a hesitation in his manner.

"What is it, Barlow?" Stella asked kindly. "How is everything up the lake?"

It was common enough in her experience, that temporary embarrassment of a logger before her. She knew them for men with boyish souls, boyish instincts, rude simplicities of heart. Long ago she had revised those first superficial estimates of them as gross, hulking brutes who worked hard and drank harder, coarsened and calloused by their occupation. They had their weaknesses, but their virtues of abiding loyalty to their salt, their reckless generosity, their simple directness were great indeed. They took their lives in their hands on skid road and springboard, that such as she might flourish. They did not understand that, but she did.

"What is it, Barlow?" she repeated. "Have you just come down the lake?"

"Yes'm," he answered. "Say, Jack don't happen to be here, does he?"

"No, he hasn't been here," she told him.

The man's face fell.

"What's wrong?" Stella demanded. She had a swift divination that something was wrong.

"Oh, I dunno's anythin's wrong, particular," Barlow replied. "Only—well, Lefty he sent me down to see if Jack was at the Springs. We ain't seen him for a couple uh days."

Her pulse quickened.

"And he has not come down the lake?"

"I guess not," the logger said. "Oh, I guess it's all right. Jack's pretty *skookum* in the woods. Only Lefty got uneasy. It's desperate hot and smoky up there."

"How did you come down? Are you going back soon?" she asked abruptly.

"I got the *Water Bug*," Barlow told her. "I'm goin' right straight back."

Stella looked out over the smoky lake, and back at the logger again, a sudden resolution born of intolerable uncertainty, of a feeling that she could only characterize as fear, sprang full-fledged into her mind.

"Wait for me," she said. "I'm going with you."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"OUT OF THE NIGHT THAT COVERS ME."

The *Water Bug* limped. Her engine misfired continuously, and Barlow lacked the mechanical knowledge to remedy its ailment. He was satisfied to let it pound away so long as it would revolve at all. So the boat moved slowly through that encompassing smoke at less than half speed. Outwardly the once spick-and-span cruiser bore every mark of hard usage. Her topsides were foul, her decks splintered by the tramping of calked boots,

grimy with soot and cinders. It seemed to Stella that everything and every one on and about Roaring Lake bore some mark of that holocaust raging in the timber—as if the fire were some malignant disease menacing and marring all that it affected, and affecting all that trafficked within its smoky radius.

But of the fire itself she could see nothing, even when late in the afternoon they drew in to the bay before her brother's camp. A heavier smoke cloud, more pungent of burning pitch, blanketed the shores, lifted in blue rolling masses farther back. A greater heat made the air stifling, causing the eyes to smart and grow watery. That was the only difference.

Barlow laid the *Water Bug* alongside the float. He had already told her that Lefty Howe, with the greater part of Fyfe's crew, was extending and guarding Benton's fire trail, and he half expected that Fyfe might have turned up there.

They got off the boat. Away back in the smoke arose spasmodic coughing of donkey engines, dull resounding of ax blades. Barlow led the way. They traversed a few hundred yards of path through brush, broken tops, stumps, coming at last into a fairway cut through virgin timber, a sixty-foot strip denuded of every growth, great firs felled and drawn far aside, brush piled and burned. A breastwork from which to fight advancing fire, it ran away into the heart of a smoky forest. Here and there blackened, fire-scorched patches abutted upon its northern flank, stumps of great trees smoldering, crackling yet. At the first such place half a dozen men were busy with shovels, blotting out streaks of fire that crept out in the dry leaf mold. No, they had not seen Fyfe. But they had been blamed busy. He might be up above.

Half a mile beyond that, beside the first donkey shuddering on its anchored skids as it tore an eighteen-inch cedar out by the roots, they came on Lefty Howe. He shook his head when Stella asked of Fyfe.

"He took twenty men around to the main camp day before yesterday," said Lefty. "There was a piece uh timber beyond that he thought he could save. I—well, I took a shoot around there yesterday, after your brother got hurt. Jack wasn't there. Most of the boys was at camp loadin' gear on the scows. They said Jack's gone around to Tumblin' Creek with one man. He wasn't back this mornin'. So I thought maybe he'd gone to the Springs. I dunno's there's any occasion to worry. He might 'a' gone to the head uh the lake with them constables that went up last night. How's Charlie Benton?"

She told him briefly.

"That's good," said Lefty. "Now, I'd go around to Cougar Bay, if I was you, Mrs. Jack. He's liable to come in there any time. You could stay at the house to-night. Everything around there, shacks, 'n' all, was burned days ago, so the fire can't touch the house. The crew there has grub an' a cook. I kinda expect Jack'll be there. Unless he fell in with them constables."

She trudged silently back to the *Water Bug*. Barlow started the engine, the boat took up her slow way. They skirted the shore. Here Stella began to see the fierce havoc of the fire. Black trunks of fir reared nakedly to the smoky sky, lay crisscross on bank and beach. Nowhere was there a green blade, a living bush. Nothing but charred black, a melancholy waste of smoking litter, with here and there a pitch-soaked stub still waving its banner of flame, or glowing redly. Back of those seared skeletons a shifting smoke cloud obscured everything.

Presently they drew in to Cougar Bay. Men moved about on the beach. Two great bulky scows stood nose on to the shore. Upon them rested half a dozen donkey engines, thick-bellied,

upright machines, blown down, dead on their skids. About these in great coils lay piled the gear of logging, miles of steel cable, blocks, the varied tools of the logger's trade. The *Panther* lay between the scows with lines from each passed over her towing bitts.

She could see the outline of the white bungalow on its grassy knoll. They had saved only that, of all the camp, by a fight that sent three men to the hospital, on a day when the wind shifted into the northwest and sent a sheet of flame rolling through the timber and down on Cougar Bay like a tidal wave. So Barlow told her. He cupped his hands now and called to his fellows on the beach.

No, Fyfe had not come back yet.

"Go up to the mouth of Tumbling Creek!" Stella ordered.

Barlow swung the *Water Bug* about, cleared the point, and stood up along the shore. Stella sat on a cushioned seat at the back of the pilot house, hard-eyed, struggling against that dead weight that seemed to grow and grow in her breast. That elemental fury raging in the woods made her shrink. Her own hand had helped to loose it. But her hands were powerless to stay it; she could only sit and watch and wait, eaten up with misery of her own making. She was horribly afraid, with a fear she would not name to herself.

Behind that density of atmosphere the sun had gone to rest. The first shadows of dusk were closing in, betokened by a thickening of the smoke fog into which the *Water Bug* slowly plowed. To port a dimming shore line, to starboard, aft, and dead ahead, water and air merged in two boat lengths. Barlow leaned through the pilot-house window, one hand on the wheel, straining his eyes on their course. Suddenly he threw out the clutch, shut down his throttle control with one hand, and yanked with the other at the cord which loosed the *Water Bug's* shrill whistle.

Dead ahead, almost upon them, came an answering toot.

"I thought I heard a gas boat," Barlow exclaimed. "Sufferin' Jerusalem! Hi, there!"

He threw his weight on the wheel, sending it hard over. The cruiser still had way on, the momentum of her ten-ton weight scarcely had slackened, and she answered the helm. Out of the deceptive thickness ahead loomed the sharp, flaring bow of another forty-footer, sheering quickly as her pilot sighted them. She was upon them, and abreast, and gone, with a watery purl of her bow wave, a subdued mutter of exhaust, passing so near that an active man could have leaped the space between.

"Sufferin' Jerusalem!" Barlow repeated, turning to Stella. "Did you see that, Mrs. Jack? They got him."

Stella nodded. She, too, had seen Monohan seated on the after deck, his head sunk on his breast, irons on his wrists. A glimpse, no more.

"That'll help some," Barlow grunted. "Quick work. But they come blame near cuttin' us down, beltin' along at ten knots when you can't see forty feet ahead."

An empty beach greeted them at Tumbling Creek. Reluctantly Stella bade Barlow turn back. It would soon be dark, and Barlow said he would be taking chances of piling on the shore before he could see it, or getting lost in the profound black that would shut down on the water with daylight's end.

Less than a mile from Cougar Bay, the *Water Bug's* engine gave a few premonitory gasps and died. Barlow descended to the engine room, hooked up the trouble lamp, and sought for the cause. He could not find it. Stella could hear him muttering profanity, turning the flywheel over, getting an occasional explosion.

An hour passed. Dark of the pit descended, shrouded the lake with a

sable curtain, close-folded, impenetrable. The dead stillness of the day vanished before a hot land breeze, and Stella felt the launch drift, knew by her experience on the lake that they were moving offshore. Presently this was confirmed, for out of the black wall on the west, from which the night wind brought stifling puffs of smoke, there lifted a yellow effulgence that grew to a red glare as the boat drifted out. Soon that red glare was a glowing line that rose and fell, dipping and rising and wavering along a two-mile stretch, a fiery surf beating against the forest.

Down in the engine room, Barlow located the trouble. The motor took up its labors, spinning with a rhythmic chatter of valves. The man came up into the pilot house wiping the sweat from his grimy face.

"Gee, I'm sorry, Mrs. Fyfe," he said. "A gas-engine man would 'a' fixed that in five minutes. Took me two hours to find out what was wrong. It'll be a heck of a job to fetch Cougar Bay now."

But by luck Barlow made his way back, blundering fairly into the outer landing at the foot of the path that led to the bungalow, as if the cruiser knew the way to her old berth. And as he reached the float the front windows on the hillock broke out yellow, pale blurs in the smoky night.

"Well, say!" Barlow pointed. "I bet a nickel Jack's home. See? Nobody but him would be in the house."

"I'll go up," Stella said.

"All right, I guess you know the path better'n I do," Barlow said. "I'll take the *Bug* around into the bay."

Stella ran up the path. She halted halfway up the steps, leaned against the rail to catch her breath. Then she went on. Her step was noiseless. Tucked in behind a cushion aboard the *Water Bug,* she had found an old pair of her own shoes, rubber-soled, and she had put them on to ease the ache in her feet, the ache born of thirty-six hours' incasement in leather shoes. She gained the door without a sound. It was wide open, and in the middle of the big room Jack Fyfe stood with hands thrust deep in his pockets, staring absently at the floor.

She took a step or two inside. Fyfe did not hear her. He did not look up.

"Jack!"

He gave ever so slight a start, glanced up, stood with head thrown back a little. But he did not move nor answer, and Stella, looking at him, seeing the flame that glowed in his eyes, could not speak. Something seemed to choke her, something that was a strange compound of relief and bewilderment and a slow wonder at herself—at the queer, unsteady pounding of her heart.

"How did you get away up here?" he asked at last.

"Linda wired last night that Charlie was hurt. I got a machine to the Springs. Then Barlow came down this afternoon looking for you. He said you'd been missing for two days. So I—I——"

She broke off. Fyfe was walking toward her with that peculiar, light-footed step of his, a queer, tense look on his face.

"Nero fiddled when Rome was burning," he said harshly. "Did you come to sing while *my* Rome goes up in smoke?"

A little, half-strangled sob escaped her. She turned to go. But he caught her by the arm.

"There, lady," he said, with a swift change of tone. "I didn't mean to slash at you. I suppose you mean all right. But just now, with everything gone to the devil, to look up and see you here—I've really got an ugly temper, Stella, that you never saw functioning—and it's pretty near the surface these days. I don't want to be

pitied and sympathized with. I want to fight. I want to hurt somebody."

"Hurt me then," she cried.

He shook his head sadly.

"I couldn't do that," he said. "No, I can't imagine myself ever doing that."

"Why?" she asked—knowing why, but wishful to hear in words what his eyes shouted.

"Because I love you," he said. "You know well enough why."

She lifted her one free hand to his shoulder. Her face turned up to his. A warm wave of blood dyed the round white neck, shot up into her cheeks. Her eyes were suddenly aglow, lips tremulous.

"Kiss me, then," she whispered. "That's what I came for. Kiss me, Jack."

If she had doubted, if she had ever in the last few hours looked with misgiving upon what she felt herself impelled to do, the pressure of Jack Fyfe's lips on hers left no room for anything but an amazing thrill of pure gladness. She was happy in his arms, content to rest there, to feel his heart beating against hers, to be quit of all the uncertainties, all the useless regrets. By a roundabout way she had come to her own, and it thrilled her to her finger tips. She could not quite comprehend it, nor herself. But she was glad, weeping with gladness, straining her man to her, kissing his face, murmuring incoherent words against his breast.

"And so—and so, after all, you do care," Fyfe held her off a little from him, his sinewy fingers gripping gently the soft flesh of her arms. "And you were big enough to come back. Oh, my dear, you don't know what that means to me. I'm broke, and I'd just about reached the point where I didn't give a damn. This fire has cleaned me out. I've——"

"I know," Stella interrupted. "That's why I came back. I wouldn't have come otherwise—at least not for a long time—perhaps never. It seemed as if I ought to—as if it were the least I could do. Of course it looks altogether different, now that I know I really want to. But you see I didn't know that for sure until I saw you standing here. Oh, Jack, there's such a lot I wish I could wipe out."

"It's wiped out," he said happily. "The slate's clean. Fair weather didn't get us anywhere. It took a storm. Well, the storm's over."

She stirred uneasily in his arms.

"Haven't you got the least bit of resentment, Jack, for all this trouble I've helped to bring about?" she faltered.

"Why, no," he said thoughtfully. "All you did was to touch the fireworks off. And they might have started over anything. Lord, no! Put that idea out of your head."

"I don't understand," she murmured. "I never have quite understood why Monohan should attack you with such savage bitterness. That trouble he started on the Tyee, then this criminal firing of the woods. I've had hints, first from your sister, then from Linda. I didn't know you'd clashed before. I'm not very clear on that yet. But you knew all the time what he was. Why didn't you tell me, Jack?"

"Well, maybe I should have," Fyfe admitted. "But I couldn't very well. Don't you see? He wasn't even an incident, until he bobbed up and rescued you that day. I couldn't, after that, start in picking his character to pieces as a matter of precaution. We had a sort of an armed truce. He left me strictly alone. I'd trimmed his claws once or twice already. I suppose he was acute enough to see an opportunity to get a whack at me through you. You were just living from day to day, creating a world of illusions for yourself, nourishing yourself with

dreams, smarting under a stifled regret for a lot you thought you'd passed up for good. *He* wasn't a factor, at first. When he did finally stir in you an emotion I had failed to stir, it was too late for me to do or say anything. You know. If I'd tried, at that stage of the game, to show you your idol's clay feet, you'd have despised me, as well as refused to believe. I couldn't do anything but stand back, and trust the real woman of you to find out what a quicksand you were building your castle on. I purposely refused to let you go, when you wanted to go away the first time. Partly on the kid's account. Partly because I could hardly bear to let you go. Mostly because I wanted to make him boil over, and show his teeth, on the chance that you'd be able to size him up.

"You see, I knew him from the ground up. I knew that nothing would afford him a keener pleasure than to take away from me a woman I cared for—and that nothing would make him squirm more than for me to checkmate him. That day I cuffed him and choked him on the Point really started him properly. After that, you—as something to be desired and possessed—ran second to his feeling against me. He was bound to try and play even, regardless of you. When he precipitated that row on the Tyee I knew it was going to be a fight for my financial life—for my own life, if he ever got me foul. And it was not a thing I could talk about to you, in your state of mind then. You were through with me. Regardless of him, you were getting farther and farther away from me. I had a long time to realize that fully. You had a grudge against life, and it was sort of crystallizing on me. You never kissed me once in all those two years as you kissed me just now."

She pulled his head down and kissed him again.

"So that I wasn't restraining you with any hope for my own advantage," he went on. "There was the kid. And there was you. I wanted to put a brake on you, to make you go slow. You're a complex individual, Stella. Along with certain fixed, fundamental principles, you've got a streak of divine madness in you, a capacity for reckless undertakings. You'd never have married me if you hadn't. I trusted you absolutely. But I was afraid in spite of my faith. You had draped such an idealistic mantle around Monohan. I wanted to rend that before it came to a final separation between us. It worked out, because he couldn't resist trying to take a crack at me when the notion seized him.

"So," he continued, after a pause, "you aren't responsible, and I've never considered you responsible for any of this. It's between him and me, and it's been shaping for years. Whenever our trails crossed there was bound to be a clash. There's always been a natural, personal antagonism between us. It began to show when we were kids, as you might say. Monohan's nature is such that he can't acknowledge defeat. He can't deny himself a gratification. He's a supreme egotist. He's always had plenty of money, he's always had whatever he wanted, and it never mattered to him how he gratified his desires.

"The first time we locked horns was in my last year at high school. Monohan was a star athlete. I beat him in a pole vault. That irked him so that he sulked and sneered, and generally made himself so insulting that I slapped him. We fought, and I whipped him. I had a temper that I hadn't learned to keep in hand those days, and I nearly killed him. I had nothing but contempt for him, anyway, because even then, when he wasn't quite twenty, he was a woman hunter, preying on silly girls.

"Well, from that time on he hated me, always laid for a chance to sting

me. We went to Princeton the same year. We collided there—so hard that when word of it got to my father's ears he called me home and read the riot act so strong that I flared up and left home. Came to the coast here and got a job in the woods, got to be a logging boss, went into business on my own hook eventually. I'd just got nicely started when I ran into Monohan again. He'd got into timber himself. I was hand-logging up the coast, and I'd hate to tell you the tricks he tried. He kept it up until I got too big to be harassed in a petty way. Then he left me alone. But he never forgot his grudge. The stage was all set for this act long before you gave him his cue, Stella. You weren't to blame for that, or if you were in part it doesn't matter now. I'm satisfied. Paradoxically I feel rich, even though it's a long shot that I'm broke flat. I've got something money doesn't buy. And he has overreached himself at last. All his money and pull won't help him out of this jack pot. Arson and attempted murder is serious business."

"They caught him," Stella said. "The constables took him down the lake to-night. I saw him on their launch as they passed the *Water Bug*."

"Yes?" Fyfe said. "Quick work. I didn't even know about the shooting till I came in here to-night about dark. Well," he snapped his fingers, "exit Monohan. He's a dead issue, far as we're concerned. Wouldn't you like something to eat, Stella? I'm hungry, and I was dog-tired when I landed here. Say, you can't guess what I was thinking about, lady, standing there when you came in."

She shook her head.

"I had a crazy notion of touching a match to the house," he said soberly, "letting it go up in smoke with the rest. Yes, that's what I was thinking I would do. Then I'd take the *Panther* and what gear I have on the scows and pull off Roaring Lake. It didn't seem as if I could stay. I'd laid the foundation of a fortune here, and tried to make a home—and lost it all, everything that was worth having. And then all at once there you were, like a vision in the door. Miracles do happen."

Her arms tightened involuntarily about him.

"Oh!" she cried breathlessly. "Our little white house!"

"Without you," he replied softly, "it was just an empty shell of boards and plaster—something to make me ache with loneliness."

"But not now," she murmured. "It's home now."

"Yes," he agreed, smiling.

"Ah, but it isn't quite," she choked down a lump in her throat. "Not when I think of those little feet that used to patter on the floor. Oh, Jack—when I think of my baby boy! My dear, my dear, why did all this have to be, I wonder?"

Fyfe stroked her glossy coils of hair.

"We get nothing of value without a price," he said quietly. "Except by rare accident, nothing that's worth having comes cheap and easy. We've paid the price and we're square with the world, and with each other. That's everything."

"Are you completely ruined, Jack?" she asked after an interval. "Charlie said you were."

"Well," he answered reflectively, "I haven't had time to balance accounts, but I guess I will be. The timber's gone. I've saved most of the logging gear. But if I realized on everything that's left, and squared up everything, I guess I'd be pretty near strapped."

"Will you take me in as a business partner, Jack?" she asked eagerly. "That's what I had in mind when I came up here. I made up my mind to propose that, after I'd heard you were ruined. Oh, it seems silly now, but I wanted to make amends that way

—at least I tried to tell myself that. Listen. When my father died he left some supposedly worthless oil stock. But it proved to have a market value. I got my share of it the other day. It'll help us to make a fresh start—together."

She had the envelope and the check tucked inside her waist. She took it out now, and pressed the green slip into his hand.

Fyfe looked at it, and at her, a little chuckle deep in his throat.

"Nineteen thousand five hundred," he laughed. "Well, that's quite a stake for you. But if you go partners with me, what about your singing?"

"I don't see how I can have my cake and eat it, too," she said lightly. "I don't feel quite so eager for a career as I did."

"Well, we'll see," he said. "That light of yours shouldn't be hidden under a bushel. And still, I don't like the idea of you being away from me, which a career implies."

He put the check back in the envelope, smiling oddly to himself, and tucked it back in her bosom. She caught and pressed his hand there, against the soft flesh.

"Won't you use it, Jack?" she pleaded. "Won't it help? Don't let any silly pride influence you. There mustn't ever be anything like that between us again."

"There won't be," he smiled. "Frankly, if I need it, I'll use it. But that's a matter there's plenty of time to decide. You see, although technically I may be broke, I'm a long way from the end of my tether. I think I'll have my working outfit clear, and the country's full of timber. I've got a standing in the business that neither fire nor anything else can destroy. No, I haven't any false pride about the money, dear. But the money part of our future is a detail. With the incentive I've got now to work and plan, it won't take me five years to be a bigger toad in the timber puddle than I ever was. You don't know what a dynamo I am when I get going."

"I don't doubt that," she said proudly. "But the money's yours if you need it."

"I need something else a good deal more right now," he laughed. "That's something to eat. Aren't you hungry, Stella? Wouldn't you like a cup of coffee?"

"I'm famished," she admitted—the literal truth. The vaulting uplift of spirit, that glad little song that kept lilting in her heart, filled her with peace and contentment—but physically she was beginning to experience acute hunger. She recalled that she had eaten scarcely anything that day.

"We'll go down to the camp," Fyfe suggested. "The cook will have something left. We're camping like pioneers down there. The shacks were all burned, and somebody sank the cookhouse scow."

They went down the path to the bay, hand in hand, feeling their way through that fire-blackened area under a black sky.

A red eye glowed ahead of them from a fire on the beach, around which men squatted on their haunches or lay stretched on their blankets, sooty-faced fire fighters, a weary group. The air was rank with smoke wafted from the burning woods.

The cook's fire was dead—that worthy humped on his bed roll, smoking a pipe. But he had cold meat and bread, and he brewed a pot of coffee on the big fire for them, and Stella ate the plain fare, sitting in the circle of tired loggers.

"Poor fellows, they look worn out," she said, when they were again traversing that black road to the bungalow.

"We've slept standing up for three weeks," Fyfe said simply. "They've done everything they could. And

we're not through yet. A north wind might set Charlie's timber afire in a dozen places."

"Oh, for a rain!" she sighed.

"If wishing for rain brought it," he laughed, "we'd have had a second flood. We've got to keep pegging away till it does rain, that's all. We can't do much, but we have to keep doing it. You'll have to go back to the Springs to-morrow, I'm afraid, Stella. I'll have to stay on the firing line literally."

"I don't want to," she cried rebelliously. "I want to stay up here with you. I'm not wax. I won't melt."

She continued that argument into the house, until Fyfe laughingly smothered her speech with kisses.

An oddly familiar sound murmuring in Stella's ear wakened her. At first she thought she must be dreaming. It was still inky dark. But the air that blew in the open window was sweet and cool, filtered of that choking smoke. She lifted herself warily, looked out, reached a hand through the lifted sash. Wet drops spattered it. The sound she heard was the drip of eaves, the beat of rain on the charred timber, upon the dried grass of the lawn.

Beside her Fyfe was a dim bulk, sleeping the dead slumber of utter weariness. She hesitated a minute, then shook him.

"Listen, Jack!" she said.

He lifted his head.

"Rain!" he whispered. "Good night, Mister Fire. Hooray!"

"I brought it," Stella murmured sleepily. "I wished it on Roaring Lake to-night."

Then she slipped her arm about his neck, and drew his face down to her breast with a tender fierceness, and closed her eyes with a contented sigh.

THE END.

THE WAYS OF GREATNESS

WHEN John Hays Hammond and the late Cecil Rhodes started out with their party from the Transvaal to locate and explore King Solomon's mines, they struck a bee line across the veldt, and each night they sat about the camp fire and later slept on blankets which had been stretched as comfortably as possible on the ground.

About the third night out, Rhodes, who liked to talk about big affairs and world topics, began to tell Hammond that the United States protective-tariff system was all wrong. Whereupon Hammond began to tell Rhodes that it was all right.

The two men lay on their blankets and looked up toward the stars while they carried on this picturesque debate about political economy. As is generally the case in all such discussions, both men became considerably heated in their remarks. But Rhodes was the hotter of the two. He got so very hot that he jumped up in a huff and dragged his blanket to a spot about fifty yards from Hammond. The next morning, when Hammond awoke, he saw Rhodes stretching himself and massaging himself freely at all points of his anatomy.

"You didn't sleep very well last night?" asked Hammond.

"No," replied Rhodes, with a grim smile. "I don't know which is the most exasperating, your hard head, or these rocks I've been lying on all night."

The Go-Getter

By John Amid

The deacon had read of that young fellow out West who bought an old car for fifty dollars and then went ahead and won the biggest race of all with it, after he had puttered over it a spell. What one could do, another could do. Witness then the Deacon behind the wheel of a hybrid thing that combined the powerful attributes of a great racing car with the uncouth appearance of a clown band wagon. A great little yarn for the buzz-wagon fan.

DEACON AIN was Deacon Ain—just as Paris Four Corners was Paris Four Corners.

When Johnny's mother asked him in shocked amazement: "Why, Johnny! Who in the world taught you to swear like that?" Johnny is reported to have answered proudly: "Nobody! It's me teaches the other fellows!"

That's the way it was with Deacon Ain—and to a certain extent also with Paris Four Corners. Nobody ever thought of saying that Deacon Ain was like anybody else, yet other people were not infrequently likened to Deacon Ain.

When Deacon Ain and Paris Four Corners were young, the deacon, it was commonly supposed, had cut quite a swath. In those pre-deaconic days, said rumor, he had been addicted to fast talking, fast horses, and fast—but why rake up the ashes of the past? The deacon's youth is done forever. Since those plunging years of his adolescence he has become in truth Deacon Ain—widely respected pillar of the Paris Four Corners Congregational church, and a pillar worthy of that wide respect. His hair has yellowed, his voice has mellowed, and his wife has bellowed. In short, he is a changed man; his little, blue eyes have a genial twinkle now, and his mouth wears, almost always, a smile of kindly fellowship; since he passed the sixty-year post his medium height has apparently diminished, while his figure has taken on a certain chubbiness altogether pleasing. Yet his hand is as steady, his command as firm, and his glance as shrewd as in the palmy days of six and twenty.

Latterly the deacon has owned automobiles. Noting the signs of the times, particularly on the back covers of such magazines as enthrall the Corners, he was one of the first in his locality to come into the possession of a genuine gas buggy. It was not a new machine at that, but had served many masters faithfully before the deacon bought it at auction in the adjoining county for one hundred and seventy-five dollars, cash. It wore an abbreviated dashboard, harmoniously curved, instead of a hood, and steered with a tiller pointed wrong end to; its vital parts were cunningly concealed beneath the seat, and in the snug little body that stopped short off at the back end. In an emergency the tailboard could be removed, and you could look directly in upon the

works—not infrequently locating the seat of the disease.

Deacon Ain, being like most Americans, more or less of a born mechanic, soon discovered his most formidable weapon, both of offense and defense, to be the common kitchen or domestic poker. With this handy tool, which he customarily secreted with a few other necessities in a gunny sack at his feet, he could in a short time accomplish wonders. Kneeling in the dust of the road directly behind his mechanical phaëton, he would peer anxiously through the open stern, and after a few moments of keen scrutiny attack viciously with the poker or kitchen prong —changing carburetor adjustment, trying connections, or hammering water pump with a dexterity inconsistent with his advancing years. The little buggy had a cheerful disposition, and customarily it was not hard to make it tick again. As soon as he had it to his satisfaction, the deacon would rise from the road, spat the dust from his pants, return the poker to its sleeping bag, wind the machine with a little crank at the end of the seat, then climb aboard and go chug-chug-chug-chuging down the road as merry as a magpie.

All would have been well, the deak might even yet have been chugging slowly and prosperously about the Four Corners in his little one-lunger—for the mechanism appeared capable of sustaining illimitable renewals and repairings —had it not been for other cars.

But there were other cars, with other occupants. Even though Deacon Ain was one of the first of the Paris Four Cornians to invest real money in an automobeel, the wide world had tried them and found itself wanting. From time to time great ocean-going monsters, green and gold or blue or maroon, or shining black with nickel trimmings —and with deep-throated, vibrating horns that made you tingle in all three of the little bones at the end of your spine—and that steered, as true deep-sea craft should, with a great wheel, instead of a contemptible handle—would pur along the quiet, sunlit roads about Paris Four Corners, swerving languidly past Deacon Ain's modest little chug buggy, while their occupants looked down in pleased amusement.

This was gall and wormwood, horseradish and Worcestershire, to the deacon's soul. He, Zedekiah Ain—who had owned more trotters in his time than all these spangled, machine-owning, dust-raising mollycoddles put together —was compelled to chug unavailingly along at a helpless fourteen miles an hour, and eat the dirt with which his condescending fellow Americans filled the air in their wake.

At last several new machines were bought—right in the Four Corners—not foreign-built traveling models with wheel bases extending to unthinkable figures, but sturdy little American touring cars for all of that, and complete in every detail.

There was no doubt about it. The time had come for the deacon to act. He, who had guided three-mile-a-minute-to-wagon horses to victory at the county fair—he who had posed as one of the pioneer automobile owners of Paris Four Corners—was now a back number. Yes! It was high time to act.

"My vum! Seliny," he told his wife, slapping his thigh in determination, "I'm a-goin' to git us another autymobeel, an' don't you say nothin' to stop me! An' she's a-goin' to be a hum-snorter, too—an' don't ye forgit it!"

If the new automobile wasn't really a regular hum-snorter, she was, at least, a very attractive, up-to-date little four-passenger model—as pleasant a machine as any man, pillar of the church or no pillar at all, could ask for.

"It's no racer, Mr. Ain," the salesman at the palatial glass-and-tile agency in the city had informed him. "You can take twenty-five miles an hour, or even thirty, and hold it over good roads —but the motor's not designed for high speed. A comfortable, economical machine, pleasant to ride in, easy to keep —a machine that you can be proud of all the year round without having to dig up a dollar for every ride you take—that's been our ideal. You can pay a lot more, but you can't buy a better family car. That's what we think."

Deacon Ain had nodded his approval. "My vum!" he had exclaimed, after a demonstrating trip to the top of a promising little hill in the city suburbs, "that's fast enough for Zedekiah!"

And so it had seemed, for the amount of wind that whistles in your ears when the speedometer shows twenty-five miles an hour, if you have long been accustomed to fourteen, seems prodigious.

The new car proved to be all that the salesman had said, and gave complete satisfaction—except for one thing. There was the same old grievance; the dust of the big, high-powered machines from the Wide World Outside. Deacon Ain even found that in brushes with one or two of the other Four Corners cars his new model had the worst of the argument.

The deacon had developed into a good driver; he was also, thanks to his long experience with the little turtle-deck one-cylinder, a fairly adroit mechanician. He could get the top speed out of his new car, and handle the machine easily at its best gait; but that was not enough. Ordinarily, it is true, he had no desire to exceed a modest eighteen or twenty miles an hour; the racing days of his youth were dead; he no longer cherished any desire to bounce about the seat and show the country what speed was—that was for younger blood and joints less tender than his own. But occasionally—just occasionally—there came the rub!

The roads about the Four Corners were deep with red dust; to be passed by another machine was a trying ordeal —an insult—a humiliation. Deacon Ain was willing to do the full twenty-five miles that the law allowed, or a little better, to hold his posion ahead of another machine; but when pursuers opened up their throttles and passed him with law-defying contemptuousness, he gritted his teeth. He had to—if he moved them at all.

While the glances from occupants of cars that passed him may have been neither as amused nor as contemptuous as in the days of his little one-lunger, to his now jaundiced eye they were both; and what had been gall and Worcestershire to his soul before was wormwood and tabasco now.

One of the most trying experiences of the deacon's life came on a hot, sultry Sunday in late June. With his wife and their two visiting nieces from the city, Deacon Ain had started for church in the still-new machine. Out of respect for the day and the occasion, he abandoned his customary eighteen-mile-an-hour clip for a still slower one that barely exceeded twelve—as slow a gait, in fact, as he could keep on the high speed without straining his motor. When passing pedestrians, bound like himself for church, he courteously deviated to the extreme side of the road, slowing to the lowest speed possible on the high in order to save them from any exaggerated annoyance of dust; meanwhile mildly thanking the Providence that had favored him with the affluence which enabled him to ride luxuriously while others less favored were forced to trudge in the dust and heat.

Upon the deacon, thus engaged in complacent Sabbath ruminations about his favored lot, there suddenly descended a great pestilence in the shape

of a huge yellow car that knew no law. From behind, coming up on him where the winding road between the trees was narrow, it honked industriously to clear the road—honked repeatedly, with loud, vulgar, insistent, and insulting honks. And the deacon, knowing the day to be the Sabbath and himself to be in the right, kept to the middle of the road and the even tenor of his way, neither minding nor mending his modest gait. The evil yellow monster came close, and honked again—angrily, blaringly, sneeringly, and most annoyingly. And still the deacon, with many past abuses of courtesy rankling in his memory, held the middle of the road. Close behind, the yellow one, of necessity, slowed to his own gait. More honks, and then—language.

At this last, much of which was fit neither for the day nor the deacon, the ladies Ain all sat bolt upright and stared straight ahead. Two little pink spots began to glow beneath the outer corners of the deacon's eyes, while the angle of his jawbone alternately became prominent and disappeared in the smooth-shaven portion of his cheek.

But the road could not be narrow forever; it rounded a last wooded turn, and straightened away into the mile-long, maple-lined avenue that led to the Congregational church.

It was the yellow monster's chance, and its hot-tongued driver lost no instant. In vain the deacon, through whose blood there now thrilled a fire like that of Lexington, jammed open his throttle with anger-trembling fingers and tramped on his foot accelerator; the little car climbed to its best gait of close to thirty-five miles an hour—but utterly in vain. With a roar from opened muffler the yellow demon leaped from behind, picking up two feet to the deacon's one. Even though, owing to the deacon's utter loss of chivalry, the stranger chauffeur was compelled to dig deep into the dust at the side of the road it was but a moment, before, with a terrific roaring of motor and a derisive honk-honking of horn, the yellow thing was past and away, in a veritable cloudburst of dust. Deacon Ain's last glimpse of the enemy, ere their machine dimmed from sight in the road storm, showed him a portly, red-faced, bewhiskered individual throwing him a parting kiss with a gauntleted hand.

Almost before he knew it, the deacon was jamming on his brakes in order to stop at the church, while the stranger's dust still swirled eddyingly along the road. Directly in front of the sacred edifice the Ain car came to a stop, dropping from its flight to a standstill with a suddenness that nearly pitched its passengers from their seats. And, while the women shook the dust from their clothes and stepped from the machine, the deacon sat motionless—gripping the wheel—breathing hard through his nose—hot, angry, dust-covered, and humiliated. He had made a spectacle of himself in the eyes of the gathered congregation; he had broken the Sabbath; and, worst of all, he had been hopelessly beaten.

During the service that followed, and most particularly when, while passing the contribution plate, he encountered from time to time the stifled mirth in the glances of his fellow church members, he thought hard thoughts. And during the night that followed, when he lay with open eyes and gazed at nothing at all, while thinking hot, uncomfortable things, he made a vow.

The next day he declared a vacation for himself, and, leaving the Four Corners behind him in the dust, drove to the city.

"Young man," he said to the salesman from whom he had purchased his machine in the luxurious tile-and-glass agency, "the little car's all you said she was; but I didn't rightly know then what thutty miles a hour meant. She hes t' eat too much dust. So I come

down t' see if I could git you to help me out a mite."

The salesman smiled. "Certainly, Mr. Ain," he said, scenting another sale, "you know we have the agency for a line of high-grade cars as well as the medium-priced little machine you bought; if you'll let me take you for a spin in our six-sixty——" The deacon interrupted him, holding up a knotty hand.

"Hold on! Hold on there, young feller! My vum! Putty figger I'd cut in the Corners, wouldn't I now, ridin' 'round in a car bigger'n my hull pig-pen!"

"Well," retorted the salesman, a trifle nettled, "if you won't buy a car that has the power, I don't see but what you'll have to eat the dust. You'll either have to do that, or put a stop to the speeding. What are you going to do about it?"

The deacon told him.

They scoured the garages of half the secondhand places of the city before the deacon found what he wanted, away back under a pile of old tops in a corner of the Car Trader's Exchange. It was hardly more than half the wreck of an old machine, without mud guards, without any body to speak of, and with a dirty outside chain drive direct to the rear wheels; but its cylinders were like sections of a factory chimney, and the big steering wheel raked aft like a mast of the pirate ship in "A River of Blood; or, The Malay's Revenge."

"She's a go-getter," said the Car Trader's proprietor admiringly, when the venerable antique was rolled out onto the floor, trailing a network of cobwebs. "With a little going over and a touch of paint, you'll have a racer that'll make the boys sit up and take notice! Why, that car raced in some of the biggest races in the country in her day. I'll let you have it for three hundred dollars."

"My vum! Putty figger I'd cut in a fandangled racer!" ejaculated the deacon. "Three hundred dollars, ye say? Humph! I'll give ye sixty-five, cash."

In the end he got it for ninety.

It was after dusk when he again reached the Four Corners, towing home his spoil. And spoil it was, certainly; no word can be found that describes the dilapidated bulk more accurately. The deacon towed it tenderly, not to his own home, nor even to the Four Corners garage, but to the little house of Hen Lane, the garage foreman.

After the old racer's new owner had paid off the new mechanic who had helped him down from the city, he called Lane from the house, and the two went over the prize with the aid of a lantern. The examination was slow, minute, speechless. At its conclusion, for exhibit Z, the foreman lifted his lantern high in the air and scrutinized the deacon's face, having evidently reached the conclusion that one or the other of them must be crazy. He made only one comment.

"Sufferin' cat hooks!" was his summary.

But the deacon only chuckled, rubbing his hands. "Mebbe I ain't nutty at all, Hennery," he said. "Mebbe steada bein' a fool I know jest what I'm a-doin' of. Mebbe you never read 'bout that young feller out West who bought a old car for fifty dollars, an' then went ahead and won the biggest blame race of all with it, arfter he'd puttered over it a spell."

"He had a heap more to work on than this, then!" Henry replied, unconvinced. But the deacon only lifted his chin with the apparent purpose of trying to see into his beard.

"Don't you fret, Hennery. A race car goes onto the junk pile whilst they's still a lot of life in it, like's not—same's a race hoss. You jest putter along—an' fix thet old wagon up—as if 'twas your own, workin' odd hours,

an' I'll pay the bill. You know me, Hennery, an' I know you. Is't a go?"

It was a go—a go that lasted nearly two months, and that ended only when the old racer had every bearing running as smoothly as when the motor first left the shop. The old war craft looked, if possible, more dilapidated than ever, but the motor could roar like a tornado, terrible as the roll of a Gatling gun.

"She makes such a dretful noise, Hennery," complained the deacon fretfully, after watching a demonstration until his ears rang; "ain't it possibil to muffle her down a mite? Or, tell ye! Might muffle three them cylinders down, an' leave one free, for a sample." And Henery, who for some weeks past had shared the deacon's plans, nodded a delighted acquiescence.

"I wuz thinkin'," went on the deacon mildly, "we might get a seat awful cheap by usin' the one off my old runabout, down behind the cow stabil." And again the foreman, after a moment's incredulous stare, broke into a grin and assented vigorously.

"A fandangled race machine, all fixed up new an' shiny," deacon went on to explain, "wuddent go well with my whiskers—not a-*tall!* Age *an'* respectability—them's my mottoes. But, Hennery!" He lifted a warning finger. "We got t' git a wiggle on! I'm a-gittin' dust throwed into me every day, these days. The car looks like a threshin' machine every time I git home, she's so dirty. Every young Kiss-me-quick in the Corners has a new car nowadays, seems like, and aims to show what a hell-dinger he kin be." The foreman nodded, with sympathetic comprehension. "We got to git a wiggle on, Hennery," the deacon concluded; "everybuddy's throwin' dirt on the old man, these days. Lin Haley give me his dust all the way home from Cherry Street yestiddy."

The old runabout seat made a wonderful transformation in the appearance of the rejuvenated racer. The effect was what might be expected should some war-scarred veteran, clad in his tattered regimentals, appear upon the street wearing the faded, prim bonnet of his paternal grandmother, resurrected from a bygone century. The straight, upright seat seemed utterly incongruous behind the big canted steering wheel. A final touch was added to the combination by an improvised tonneau upon which the deacon insisted; this was constructed by nailing to the rear end of the body the high-back seat of a huge old sleigh that had roosted for decades on the rafters of the deacon's barn. A brand-new State license number completed the picture.

"I'd 'a' liked to steer her with a rudder stick, same's the little runabout," commented the deacon sadly, "but it wuddent a-ben safe. She's too gosh-awful strong."

Hen Lane's house lay on the outskirts of the Corners; his work on the old car had attracted little attention. A garage foreman, who is not rehabilitating some machine of past eras in his leisure hours, is a rarity. The final additions, that so transmuted the appearance of the whole car—the laying on of seats—was done on a single holiday, and the deacon drove home in the edge of the evening, unnoticed. Although he had taken a spin or two with the foreman while trying out the restored motor, the power that he found stored 'neath the hood was little short of terrifying. It was necessary for him to call back all the old resolution of the young days when he had guided trotters at the county fair, and never before had he been more devoutly thankful for his cool head and steady hand. The hybrid Thing beneath him combined the powerful attributes of a great racing car with the uncouth appearance of a clown band wagon. Twenty miles an hour was the lowest the deacon could make with any comfort on the high;

to go slower than that heated the motor unmercifully. "My vum!" he found himself muttering over and over again, half fearfully, half admiringly, "she *is* a go-getter!"

The following day, the day of the Sunday-school picnic, saw the deacon's plans vindicated.

Lin Haley, by a chance that seemed almost providential, was the first on whom the blow fell.

Young Haley was sweet on Leona Griscom. It was, perhaps, with the thought that a honeymoon in a touring car would be a delightful thing, that he had purchased the big, black six-cylinder machine which had caused talk all over the Corners. With Leona at his side, he overtook Deacon Ain on his way to the picnic grounds, less than half a mile from the Ain place. The deacon was alone in the go-getter, tooling pleasantly along just inside the legal limit of twenty-five miles. He had packed the rest of the family off earlier, in the little touring car.

The high belly old sleigh seat of the go-getter was not particularly unlike the tonneau of certain old-time two-cylinder machines; the stiff little front seat seemed a humorous caricature of the car designs of a decade or more ago. The placid, venerable figure of the deacon behind the big, slanting wheel and the slow, staccato chugging of the single unmuffled cylinder were quite in harmony with the whole; here was a modern Rip van Winkle, descended from his mountain peak to shock the present with a lumbering apparition of the past.

"Land alive!" exclaimed Leona suddenly, catching sight of the rear of the go-getter through the dust—Lin being too preoccupied with the pleasant sensations involved in driving a high-powered car with one hand to be particularly cognizant of what traveled in front of them. "Look what we're comin' to!" They were making a good thirty miles an hour, and rapidly overhauling the machine in front.

"Why, Lin!" she exclaimed again, a moment later, "it's Deacon Ain! He's got his old one-cylinder engine in a great, big old car!"

Lin only stared, half doubting the evidence of his own eyes. "No," he said at last doubtfully, "that ain't possible. He's got an old one-cylinder touring car—regular old he-one! I didn't know they even made any."

They drew alongside, still staring, waved sympathetic hands to the deacon in passing, and drew ahead.

Then it happened.

Chuckling in anticipation, the deacon opened the throttle, and the go-getter responded as if to a starter's gun. She seemed to leap for the road ahead, catch it, and with a single rush draw through the dust and alongside the Haley car. Then Haley's jaw dropped in stupefaction. The wheels of his car swerved, and he barely avoided an accident. Already the go-getter, traveling with two wheels deep in the dust of the roadside, was drawing past him, jerking out great isolated explosions that would have done credit to a formidable pump engine.

Hen Lane had done his work well. Two mufflers, coupled together, rendered three of the powerful cylinders relatively inaudible; the open exhaust of the fourth, firing direct at the side, as any big racer, made up for the rest. It discharged red flame like a cannon, and a report that seemed as loud. With every great chug, the go-getter, now splitting the air at her racing clip, seemed to travel a hundred yards. Like a cataclysmic one-cylinder devil she tore ahead, swerving back onto the road in a cloud of dust.

"Sufferin' tomcats!" said Lin. Then he choked.

But it was not quite all over. Instead of disappearing down the road ahead, the deacon slowed back to his

former gait, just inside the legal speed limit. Emitting derisive chugs from its one unmuffled cylinder, the go-getter coughed placidly along in the middle of the road, while Lin and Leona coughed along behind.

As he was in a hurry, Lin, thinking that, perhaps, in his surprise he had failed to get the most out of his car, made one attempt to pass. That one time was quite sufficient; the deacon allowed him to draw almost alongside, giving the go-getter only enough throttle to enable her to maintain her lead and right to the middle of the road. Tearing through the weeds and over the bumps, two wheels in the gutter, Lin was licked without once drawing even, and knew it. There was nothing left for him to do but to fall back and take the deacon's dust—or fall back half a mile farther still to be rid of it. Unable to take defeat graciously, he alternated between the two, while the deacon—even at the risk of overheating his engine a trifle—kicked free his high and dropped down to less than fifteen miles an hour. Grimy with dust, fighting mad, but knowing that he could not compete with the terrible old wagon ahead, Lin at last took his punishment sullenly and daddled along in the dust to the picnic grounds.

At the picnic, of course, the go-getter came in for a lot of comment, while men hugged themselves at sight of it, and slapped the deacon joyfully upon the shoulder blades. But the deacon said nothing about the old wagon's speeding potentialities, and Lin Haley had just sense enough left to keep his mouth shut, and he told Leona ungraciously to do the same. So it was that in the middle of the afternoon the deacon was allowed to crank the go-getter unassisted and lead the way along the only available road toward the Four Corners.

His fondest hopes were more than realized. Anxious to show off the speed of their cars, most of the younger moneyed members of the congregation delayed a little at the picnic grounds, allowing the smaller vehicles to precede them. Then, one by one, they loaded up and started away in pursuit, confident of passing rivals and achieving glory before reaching home.

The result of this maneuvering was that the go-getter headed a mile-long, dust-begrimed procession into the Corners half an hour later. One after another the young bloods and the old reprobates had tried to treat the go-getter as Lin Haley had done, only to meet in succession Lin Haley's fate. There was this difference: not one had been allowed to get past. The deacon had opened the throttle of his wicked old buggy, holding the center of the road, and there was nothing for the cars that attempted to pass to do except to fall back into the dust, as Lin Haley had done, after getting their bellyful of the weeds and bumps at the side of the road.

The late comers suffered this further humiliation: overtaking the procession of already defeated cars, they were compelled to swing to the side of the road and pass the whole moving line in the cloud of dust, enjoying thumps and bumps and ominous lack of picnic conversation. Only when they reached the deacon at the head of the procession were they shown their place; then, after being compelled to realize that they could at the best only eat gravel at the go-getter's nigh flank, they were compelled—since every other car of sufficient power kept as close as possible to the car ahead—to fall back along the entire line and take their humiliated position in the wake of the weary procession.

The deacon's triumph was absolute. From that day onward the story spread, the power grew. He was unanimously elected President of the Four Corners Grange; he rose to be senior deacon in

the Congregational church. Doubtless, had he so wished it, he could have had the office of President of the Ladies' Aid Society, and the secretaryship as well.

From time to time, of course, there were resurrections—doubting Thomases anxious to show what their cars could do, who defied the go-getter to its gears. But they were reduced, one and all; sooner or later the go-getter got 'em. Whenever he heard of a local car that was being driven above the speed limit, the deacon made a point of climbing into the go-getter, hunting it out, and publicly humiliating it.

Occasionally stranger city folk, touring the country at a high rate of speed, fell into the pit, and had the humiliation of seeing the splendid green and gold, or blue, or brown bodies of their cars covered with dust from the wheels of an uncouth, antiquated, antediluvian caricature of an automobile, that chugged derisively past them at the side of the road. And then while the go-getter dawdled along the road ahead at any speed the deacon chose, coughing contentedly with its single unmuffled cylinder—covering untold spaces to a single "chuff"—the speed-limit-hating visitors were compelled to cough discontentedly along in the swirling dust of the road behind, even as Lin Haley had done. It helped little on such occasions that the deacon's fellow townsfolk, who highly appreciated the not infrequent spectacle, stopped work to come to their doors, and cheer and wave handkerchiefs and ring dinner bells and blow fish horns. In order to lend a fine artistic finish to these performances, Deacon Ain equipped the go-getter with a bicycle bell and an alarm clock, of the type that rings intermittently and victoriously.

On one joyful day it fell out that the yellow car, which had started the fracas by throwing dust and humiliation upon the deacon before the church, came by in season and was adequately humbled.

There remains but a single incident to record, as a sort of postlude.

Quiet was upon the countryside. The breezes wafted peace above its cherry trees and pear trees and apple trees and family trees. The Four Corners authorities, making hay while the sun, and popular sentiment, shone upon them, enforced their speed laws. The go-getter was no longer needed, but drowsed the long days idly through beside the barn. Just like that. Poetry and plenty were everywhere; all Paris Four Corners exhaled prosperity. And —and—Deacon Ain drove leisurely about, just inside the legal speed limit, in his modest little touring car—and ate no dust.

Then came the incident, in the shape —have you guessed it?—of the yellow car, reappearing from the Wide World Beyond.

Perhaps its occupants recognized the deacon. Perhaps they didn't recognize Paris Four Corners, with its new reputation for the enforcement of old laws. At any rate, the law-defying, law-denying occupants who had thrown the deacon his fateful kiss that Sabbath morning passed his little touring car again, with great éclat and dust.

But the desecration did not pass unnoticed. Although the deacon, now grown more charitable than ever through the triumphs of his long reign, gave no sign other than momentarily raised eyebrows, a fellow Four Cornian saw and grew resentful. Instead of fruitlessly saddling his runabout and joining in the vain pursuit, this brainy citizen scuttled for his telephone and called up the marshal at the Corners.

The message came in time. The yellow car was stopped, and its occupants promptly arrested, charged with speeding. The trial was held immediately on the open steps of the post office, and

Deacon Ain himself, coming up, officiated as the final witness for the offense.

"I hereby adjudge you guilty of the counts as charged," came the verdict of the justice of the peace, who, ex-officio, was also postmaster, "and impose upon you a fine of fifteen dollars, cash, and one apology in person to the citizen upon whom affront was placed."

Then, surely, the man who threw the kiss that calm forenoon must have recognized its recipient. But he apologized quite handily. It was the only way out of the situation and Paris Four Corners. "We ain't a-goin' t' let nobuddy start the deaking a-throwin' of dirt acrost th' hull township ag'in," the postmaster was muttering to the marshal in a threatening aside.

"Yup," remarked Deacon Ain, accepting the apology with deep satisfaction, "twenty-five miles a hour is plenty fast."

AN INDIAN PURSE

To L. K. W.

AN Indian purse, a beadwork ornament;
And rich upon the buckskin's tawny gold,
In color magic boldly eloquent,
A song is wrought and legends manifold.

A touch of azure for the western sky;
Wine-red of sunsets; yellow mesa bloom;
Purple of ancient rites ensombered by
The black of questioning silence and the tomb.

Pale amethyst of dawn in desert land;
Crimson of conquest, gray of temple stone;
Hue of the sage and dun of drifting sand,
Encircled by the white of the unknown.

Barbaric song empatterned clear and free,
Each measure cadenced as the colors change;
And all symbolic of the Mystery
Forever old, forever new and strange.

Contrast, harmonious blending, savage grace,
Tradition reincarnate, ages mute,
Triumph, despair, enduring pride of race;
A treasure purse—the beadwork of the Ute.

Chief, from thy gift, historic in its theme,
The thong is loosed that this my song may wend
Out from the desert tipi where I dream,
Across the snow-locked plain to thee, my friend.

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS.

A Chat With You

AS you know, we read and consider a great many thousand manuscripts every week. As you know, also—for you read them in THE POPULAR—many of these are very good stories. There are others, the ones you don't read, some not quite so good, and some not good at all. We always know at once whether we like a story or not. That is largely a matter of feeling. What puzzles us more at times is to explain why one story is better than another, and to point out the qualities that make a really fine story. We want to try now to explain what we consider one of the most important qualities of good fiction—an almost indispensable quality in a tale that rises above mediocrity or cheap melodrama—a quality that has been the endowment of every great writer, and is the real sign manual of greatness in every sort of interpretive or creative art.

THE quality is sympathy. The art of writing is the art of portraying human character through action, and no one can understand a human being unless he sympathizes with him. When you think of the friends you know well, you realize at once that the world is by no means divided into two classes—the good and the bad. There is something of bad in the best, and something of good in the worst when you really get to know them. A writer to be really great should be able to portray even a villain with sympathy and understanding. He should be able to take the villain's point of view. In all of Shakespeare's characters, from Macbeth to Shylock, there is scarcely any one with whom we cannot sympathize at one time or another. How different it is in the case of a raw melodrama! Here we have a hero and heroine who are absolutely impeccably virtuous. And here opposed to them a villain and villainess who are absolutely and thoroughly wicked. We would enjoy the conflict between good and evil if it were anything like real life. But too often in our own experience the conflict is staged between the two forces in a man's own heart, and how seldom is it that a man's misfortunes are due altogether to the malice of others and not partly to some weakness of his own. Then, too, the human animal is composed of various traits and qualities, some heroic, some villainous, some sordid, and some just funny. If you paint a man all villainy or all heroism you are giving something more like a silhouette or a cartoon than an actual portrait. For instance, "Godahl," the creation of Frederick Irving Anderson, in his story in the present issue of the magazine, is a man the police would very much like to get hold of. By all the rules of old Third Avenue melodrama, he ought to be a most despicable villain, and yet we find ourselves rather liking him.

TO really write well, a man ought to be able to see more than one side of a subject. Fanatics, for instance, sometimes do good in the world, but who ever heard of a fanatical person who could write a good story? A fanatic is a man whose whole nature is turned against some evil with which he struggles. By dint of struggling and thinking, the evil becomes the biggest thing in the world, and the people

who defend it or practice it thorough and inveterate scoundrels. That lets the fanatic out so far as fiction writing is concerned. A story to be good must amuse and entertain; it may instruct or edify, but if it ever deliberately preaches there is a rift within the lute, that destroys all the melody of good story writing.

A. M. CHISHOLM, to take another writer with whose work you are familiar, has drawn a lot of red-blooded men both good and bad. His heroes are not heroes at all in the old, conventional moving-picture sense, but men of real character, in whom the good considerably overbalances the evil. And his villains—Skookum Bill and old man Dobbs, for instance, are so genuinely human as to be almost lovable at times. They are not all bad any more than the other people are all good. Of course, it is not just this quality alone that makes Chisholm a good writer, but it is this being able to see all around all his characters and sympathize with all of them that makes his humor, his pathos, his character development so powerful and holding. There is another novel by Chisholm beginning in the next issue of THE POPULAR. It is called "J. Long—Guide," and is up to his best standard.

A CERTAIN amount of aloofness and detachment is necessary for a man to be able to write good fiction. If he is passionately wrought up about some subject, he will get his own feelings mixed up with those of his characters. The novel with a purpose may be a very serious matter for the purposeful man who writes it, but as a novel it is likely to be more or less of a joke. Cullen's story, "The Intimate Enemy," might have been turned into a preachment that would have interested very few. It has its lesson, ten times as strongly presented and powerful as if the author had tried to convince the reader of anything by preaching or argument. Any one who can read that story without getting the conviction that alcohol is a dangerous thing to meddle with has a peculiar mind and disposition. After all, there is only one purpose that a writer should have in mind when he writes—and that is to write a good story, to keep always away from dullness, and to make it as true to life itself as in him lies. The lessons, the sermons that come to a man out of the study of life itself are far truer and more effective than the formal utterances of the best preacher living.

TO make a character really interesting, the writer must sympathize with him and understand his point of view. H. C. Rowland has written a new novel, "The Central-office Man," which will appear, complete, in the next issue of the magazine. The principal characters in this drama are the detective—who is entirely unlike any detective you have ever read about before—two remarkable and attractive women, and a man who is a born criminal and fit to play the part of villain in the wildest melodrama ever staged. All through the story you are anxious to have this man locked up—and at the same time you are interested in him, you get his peculiar point of view, you appreciate the strange fascination he is able to exercise over women—and yet your sympathies are all on the side of the detective. We don't know whether we have succeeded in making ourselves clear on the subject of sympathetic character drawing, but we know that you will understand fully what we mean when you read the examples we have mentioned in the next issue of the magazine.

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FIELD - TRAP AND TARGET

IN the good old days of the trapshooting game, targets were made of two pieces of pressed metal held together with a small chain. The upper section of the bird resembled a hollow dome, which when filled with feathers was fastened to the saucer-like under portion of the target by a small spring or catch. When the target was "hit," the top flew off, and the feathers were scattered about in the atmosphere, thus denoting a "dead" bird.

The veteran trapshooter will no doubt consider this description superfluous. To the younger element it is essential, however, because it has to do with the story that follows.

"Bud" Jenkins was not much of a marksman. Goose eggs multiplied with rapid consistency on all of his score sheets. But what Bud lacked in gun skill, he made up for in ingenuity, hence there originated within his fertile dome a big idea—a brilliant plan, destined to lift him out of the class of "those who also shot" into the realm of "cracks."

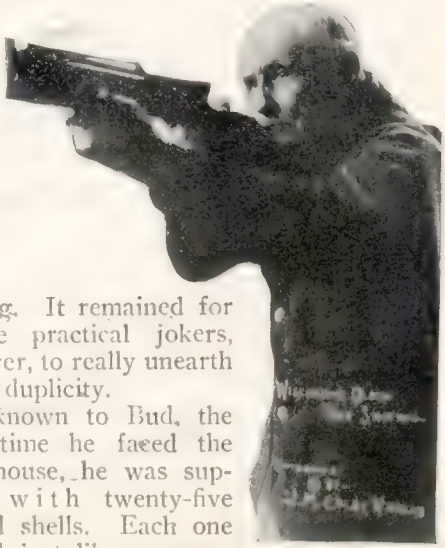
Best of all, the plan worked out beyond Bud's expectations. From a rank outsider at the best, he soon became one of his club's best little performers. His scores ran high with consistent regularity. Straight runs of fifty and a hundred became the rule rather than the exception. He cleaned up everything in sight as slick as grease and as smooth as velvet. In fact, his shooting became so good that it became monotonous.

"Sudden success generally foretells a failure," says the old adage. Bud's career ran likewise. Emboldened by his easy achievements, straight shooting became too slow. Bud went in for the fancy stuff. Hip shooting, mirror stunts, and several other departures were added to his repertoire. And—again the spectators marveled.

Had he stuck to the straight stuff, everything might have gone along in good shape. But there was something too uncanny about the frills. Putting one and one together, there were likewise some curious characteristics about his shooting in general.

His trap boy was always the same. His targets always broke at equal distances from the trap house. More interesting still was his ability to get his birds so quickly—almost as soon as they cleared the trap house.

To the more superficial observer, these things were meaningless—attributed to quick shooting and personal eccentricities. To the more experienced, they were nonplusing. It remained for some practical jokers, however, to really unearth Bud's duplicity.



JOSEPH HEINNEMAN

Celebrated his 91st birthday by breaking 100 straight targets

Unknown to Bud, the next time he faced the trap house, he was supplied with twenty-five special shells. Each one looked just like an average shell, and was apparently just as normal. The main difference was that

in each shell the load of shot had been carefully removed, and just plain sand substituted. No one knew of the exchange save a few of the boys who were in on the secret.

Obviously without any shot in the shells, Bud could not be expected to turn in a clean score, but imagine the surprise, the consternation of the jokers, when target after target went down under his magic aim.

Criminologists will tell you that the solution of most crimes lies in the inability of the perpetrators to cover every detail or possible contingency that may arise. They will also tell you that the simpler the plan and the fewer incidents connected with the mystery the more difficult it is to solve.

Now, Bud's plan was simplicity in itself. Its main factors were a spool of black linen thread and the element of time. The modus operandi consisted of merely cutting

RALPH SPRINGER—"A Boy Crack."

the thread into lengths of about five yards—attaching one end to the spring on the target and the other on a convenient nail at the edge of the trap house. At the command "pull," the target would leave the trap in the usual way. When it reached the end of the thread, the latter would naturally grow taut just before it broke, giving in that instant just enough tension to release the target cap spring. The result was that the target would snap, spreading its load of feathers in the air. In this way, every appearance of a real "dead" bird was simulated, while the target fell in just the manner that any well-behaved target should.

By testing the procedure, it was possible to fairly judge the length of time consumed by the target in its flight, and to pull the gun trigger accordingly. And as the explosion of the gun would divert the spectators' attention for a certain length of time, any small degree of inaccuracy would be covered up. Furthermore, it can readily be seen that a bright chap working on such a system could just naturally turn his back on the target, shoot anywhere he pleased, and still be sure of getting his "bird."

Oh, my, yes! Bud is still shooting, but—he's back in our "class" now.

* *

POSITION may not be everything in life, but it's a pretty big factor when it comes to trapshooting, for no shooter can ever expect to reach the top rungs of the ladder unless he pays considerable attention to this apparently small detail.

One's position at the score may seem trivial when compared to the many other features that go to make an expert shot, but any "crack" will tell you that it is the first fundamental of success.

Just how to stand is comparatively easy of explanation where an actual demonstration can be made. It is another thing to describe it in plain type.

For instance, watch the experienced shooter. His attitude is invariably easy, and allows for the free handling of his gun. There is nothing strained in his position. He leans slightly forward with his left foot about six or seven inches in advance of the right. The weight of his body rests mainly on his left leg, giving a perfect poise and balance. His left hand is held well out on the barrel, while his right hand firmly grips the gun at the "grip." His body seems easily pivoted at the hips, allowing for a free swing to right or left as the course of the target may demand.

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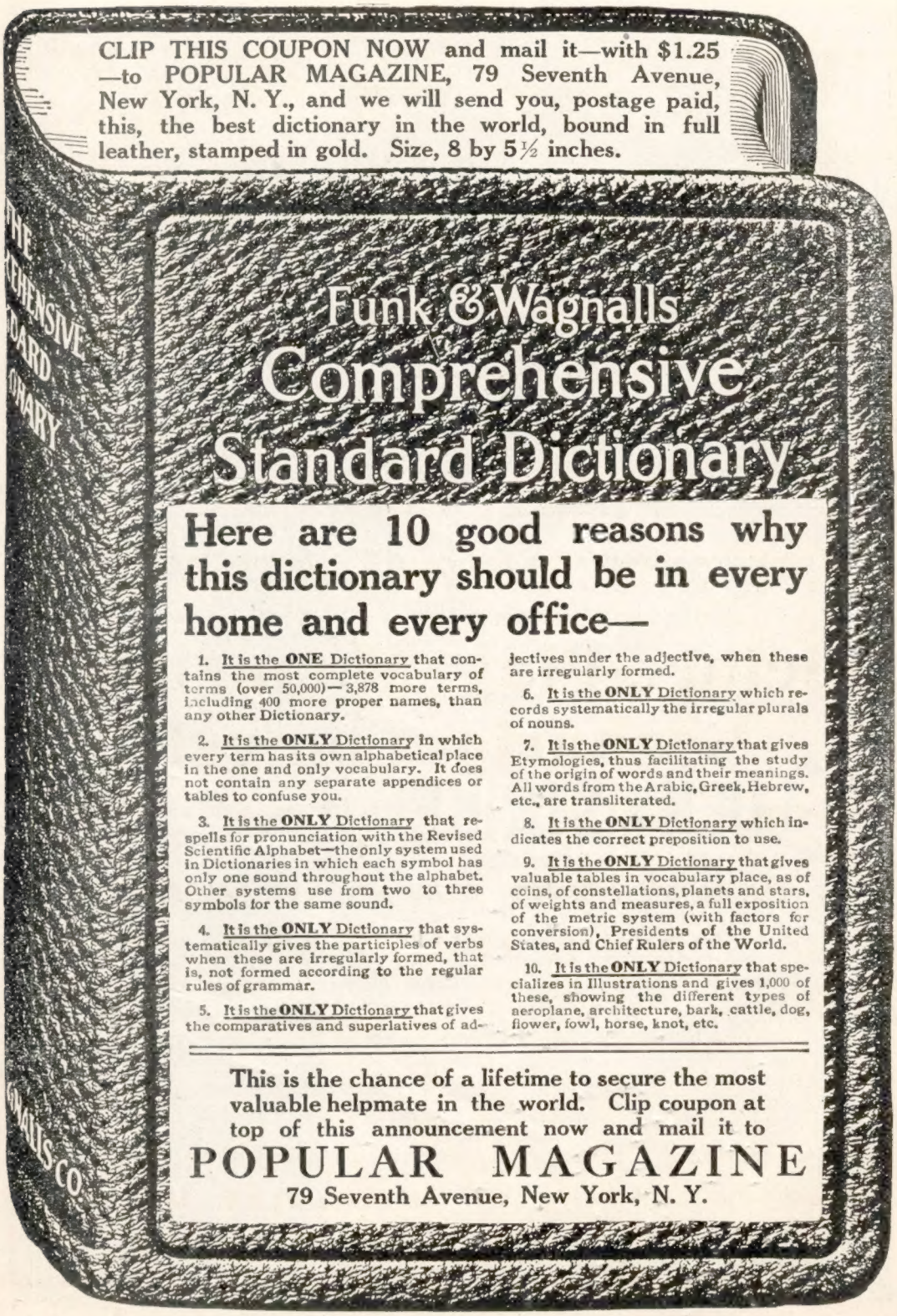

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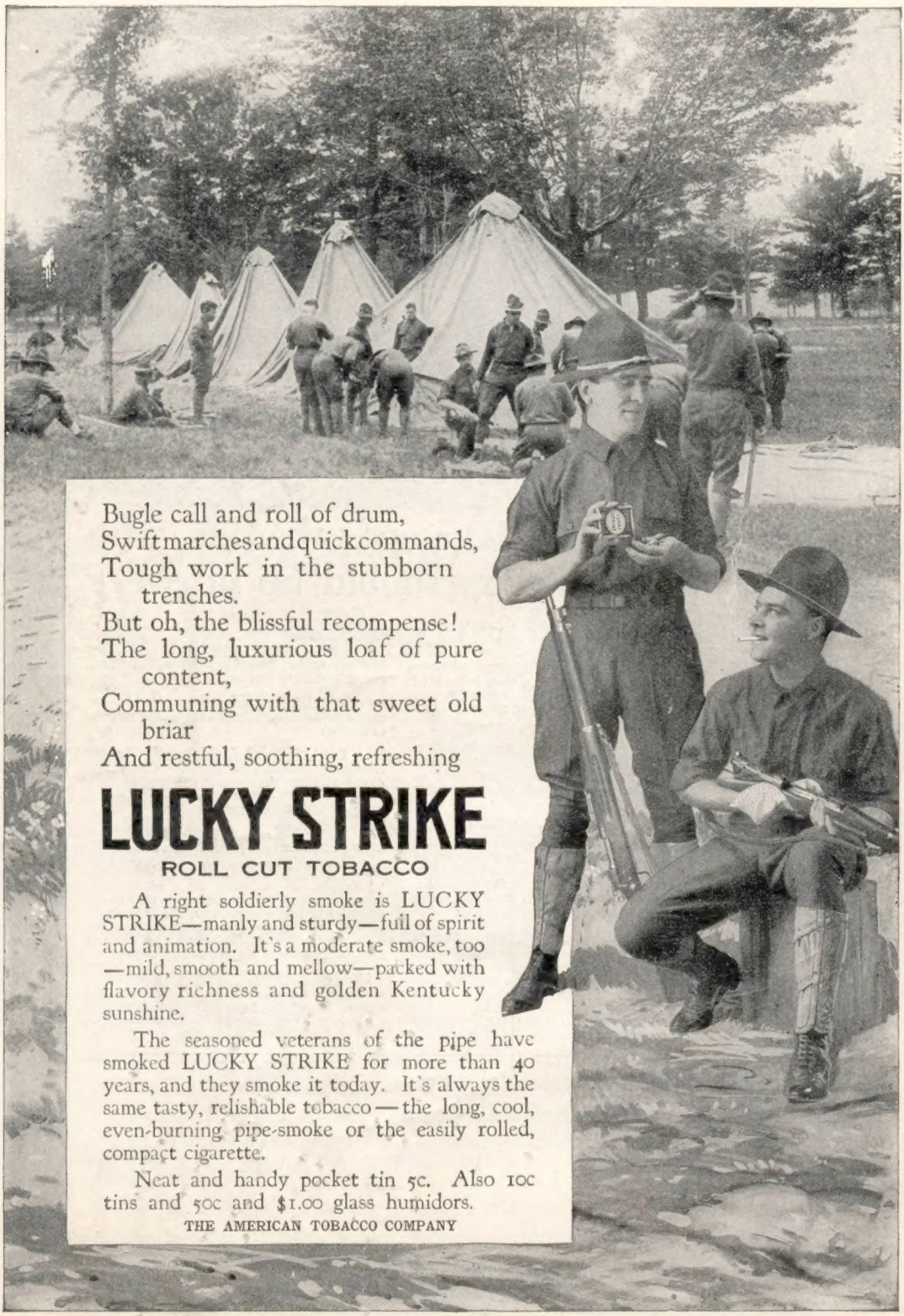

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